



INTANGIBLE
CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF
BHUTAN

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Research & Media Division
National Library & Archives of Bhutan

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Dedication

*This book is published as one of the events
commemorating the 60th Birth Anniversary of
our beloved Fourth King,
His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck,
to whom we wish
good health, happiness and a long life.*

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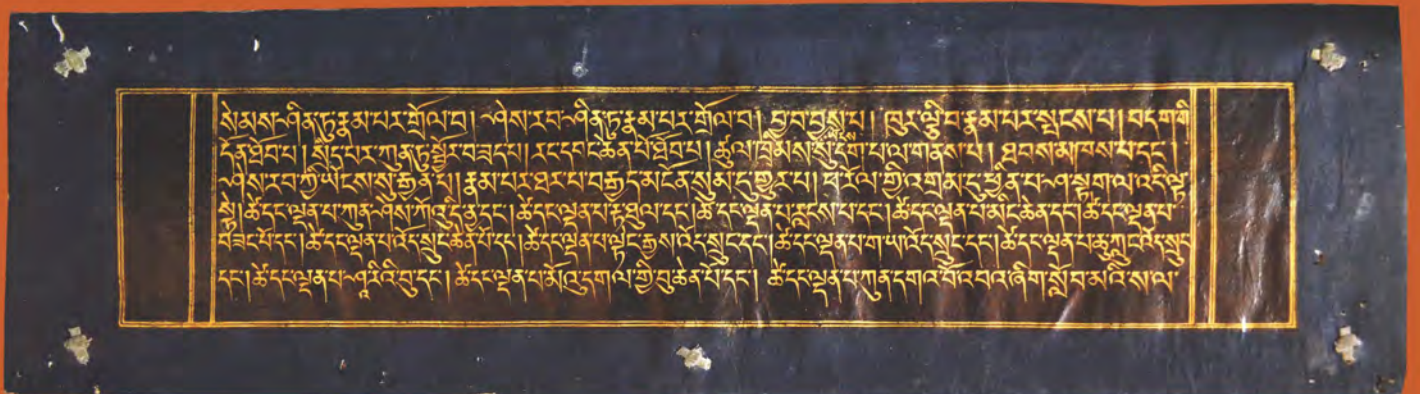
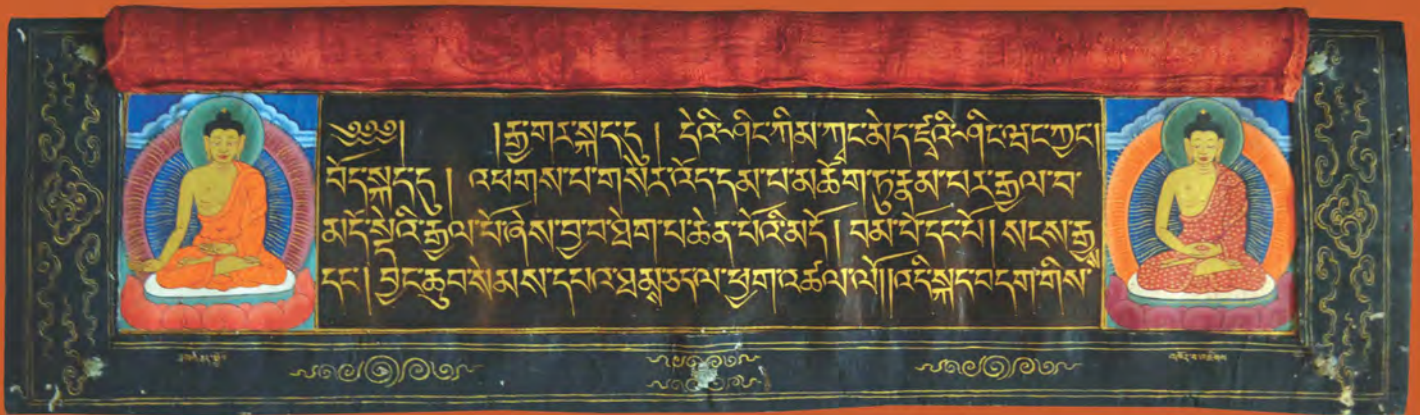
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FOREWORD

It is truly a joy and an honor to be given the opportunity to write the foreword for the publication entitled *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan*, which contains broad and detailed information on the subject. This book is the product of the past four years of shared efforts between Bhutan's Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs and ICHCAP, which began in 2011. It is my belief that this work will provide the basis upon which the people of Bhutan and the international community in the field of ICH can understand and share an interest in the intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan as well as build a foundation for its effective safeguarding.

Intangible cultural heritage is the source of mankind's identity and creativity as well as the driving force for sustainable development, constituting a valuable wealth for all of humanity through which generations both present and future can come together to learn and experience the wisdom in the lives and thoughts of our ancestors. To recognize the importance of ICH and to safeguard it requires identifying and documenting heritage assets that each community and society recognizes as ICH.

Due to being located in the Himalayas, Bhutan has had relatively little contact with the outside world, and therefore has been able to create, develop, and preserve various forms of ICH from different communities within the country. Furthermore, the religious characteristics stemming from Buddhism and Hinduism have resulted in combining not only tangible but also intangible forms of cultural heritage with aspects of daily life, which has culminated in an abundant wealth of ICH.

Moreover, the philosophy of Bhutan as a nation seeks to navigate the current of materialistic civilization through the Gross National Happiness Index, focusing on the balance and harmony between the mind and the material with regards to human life. The way of life in endeavoring towards humankind's progress by recognizing the importance of immaterial wealth without neglecting it, and accepting it as a facet of life, is in line with the spirit in which the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was concluded in 2003. However, various internal and external circumstances have created a wide range of difficulties and challenges, hindering the safeguarding of ICH in Bhutan.

Therefore, ICHCAP aims to support ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region by implementing a diverse range of international and regional projects revolving around the informational and networking functions of the Centre. The purpose of these projects is to support ICH safeguarding and relevant capacity-building efforts among the forty-eight Member States in the region. To this end, the Centre has provided support to publish *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan*, for which the Bhutanese government has directly conducted onsite research on communities across sixteen regions to systematically discover and collate information on three hundred ICH elements. It is my belief that this book will be a useful source of information for understanding and safeguarding ICH in Bhutan, promoting international and regional cooperation for the aforementioned purpose, and developing a cultural means of sustainable development in the country.

The publication of this valuable book was made possible through the work and efforts of a number of people in Bhutan and Korea. First of all, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude towards the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs in Bhutan for their relentless support for the successful publication of this book and for recognizing the importance of this project. In addition, I would also like to express my utmost thanks and regard for the dedicated efforts from all those

at the Bhutan National Library and Archives—in particular, Director Dasho Harka B. Gurung, Dr. Yonten Dargye, and Mr. Sonam Tobgay—who persevered through difficult conditions, traversing dangerous mountain terrains, to visit ICH bearers and communities so that they could conduct investigations and later organize the collected information into a book. Further thanks go out to the staff at ICHCAP—Mr. Deoksoon Kim, Mr. Weonmo Park, and Ms. Minyung Jung—for their tireless efforts over the past four years to prepare for the publication of this book and seeking cooperation with Bhutan.

It is my hope that this book will become the first step towards raising the profile of Bhutanese ICH at home and abroad and an opportunity to broadly spread the importance of ICH safeguarding. Furthermore, I hope that this book will be effective in being used by various personnel within Bhutan in the field of ICH (policymakers, experts, researchers, NGOs, etc.) for the safeguarding and active transmission of ICH in Bhutan.

Huh Kwon



Director-General
International Information and Networking Centre
for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region
under the auspices of UNESCO
(ICHCAP)

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

Congratulations on publishing Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan through the collaborative efforts of Korea and Bhutan!

Published with funding from Korea's ODA budget, the book is a product of the past four years of mutual cooperation between the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP), with support from the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, and the Bhutanese Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs.

Early on, in 1962, the Korean government, well aware of the value and importance of intangible cultural heritage, enacted the Cultural Properties Protection Act and has been taking the lead in the field of cultural heritage safeguarding and transmission. Later on, Korea joined the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and has since been making considerable efforts to support safeguarding and research activities regarding the intangible cultural heritage in other countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Since 2011, Korea has been enthusiastically supporting the activities of ICHCAP, a UNESCO Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, related to ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region.

Created as part of that effort, Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan will serve as an important resource for establishing the identity of traditional Bhutanese culture because the cultural heritage, especially that which is intangible, is a reflection of humanity, of every community's philosophy of life, their set of the beliefs, and the manner they go about their daily lives.

Numerous countries in Asia and the Pacific were relatively slow to be exposed to the influences of Western industrialization, and even as late as the final years of the twentieth century had been successful in preserving their traditions and intangible cultural heritage. In the twenty-first century, however, influenced by the rapid progress in information technology and exchange of goods across borders, our common heritage is losing its original form, sometimes even vanishing, at an alarmingly dangerous speed.

Traditional cultures in their original form serve as positive proof of the development, evolution of human civilization, making the process of cultural archiving an imperative precondition to ensure a prosperous future for humankind. I believe it is highly meaningful, therefore, to compile a reference book as part of an effort to archive the intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan.

Like the beauty of Bhutanese architecture that incorporates and blends in with its surrounding nature, the archived records of the intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan, I hope, will also secure its position as a cultural resource that is appreciated by the world.

I express my sincere gratitude to the experts from both countries and ICHCAP for your hard work and dedication in making this book a reality.

Rha Sun-hwa



Administrator
Cultural Heritage Administration
Republic of Korea





ཕྱི་ལོ་འཛིན་ལས་ཁུངས།
Department of Culture
Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan



Message from the Director

At the core of Bhutanese life lies a multifaceted intangible cultural heritage (ICH) generated from the living experiences of many generations of Bhutanese people. This heritage has evolved, been maintained and then passed down to successive generations over many centuries. Although it may include some elements that are common with those of other societies in the region, due to the threefold influence of physical landscape, way of life and spiritual traditions rooted in both Buddhism and pre-Buddhist culture, the Bhutanese ICH appears in many ways unique in its richness and vibrancy. Such an invaluable cultural resource compels comprehensive research and documentation to ensure its preservation for future generations in the face of the ever-increasing (if inevitable) pressures of change.

Thus, in line with the policy of cultural preservation and promotion, the Research and Media Division, National Library and Archives has brought out this comprehensive and timely book on the ICH of Bhutan with the generous funding support of the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP), Republic of Korea.

The book includes descriptions of different elements of Bhutanese intangible culture under five chapters, and is the result both of the unfailing support of ICHCAP and of the sterling efforts by the respective researchers, who are to be congratulated for their valuable contribution towards preservation of our rich cultural heritage.

Learning, studying, promoting and transmitting the Bhutanese culture, and its essence — the intangible cultural heritage — is a sublime obligation for each and every Bhutanese today. This book will not only serve as a basic manual for the study of the ICH of Bhutan for the future generations, but also inspire them to renew and share their awareness of (and engagement in) the research of our culture and traditions. Many of our students, I hope will thereby enjoy carrying on in-depth research on all aspects of this intangible cultural heritage.

I sincerely hope that this important publication in cultural studies will play a major part in invoking wider enthusiasm among the younger generations and appreciate their values with respect and pride. I wish the readers joyful reading!

Rinzin Penjore
Director
Department of Culture
Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project, preliminary inventory making, took two years of strenuous activity, involving field visits, documentation and subsequent writing up. The writing up of the data and compilation of this report remained a work in progress for much longer than we would have wished, principally due to the wide scope of the subject matter and also to the authors' other professional commitments in their respective positions. Now it is with great pleasure that we present the results of two years of research in this modest book, entitled "*Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan (ICH)*".

In bringing this report to its present form, we have many debts to acknowledge. First and foremost, we must put on record that this book on ICH would not have seen the light of day in its present form without the generous financial support of International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (IHCAP). We are very happy to acknowledge our profound debt of gratitude to IHCAP for both financial aid and their continuing support and encouragement of our efforts to document and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan. Their most kind assistance to us will not be forgotten.

Dorjee Tshering, former Director General of the Department of Culture and Harka B. Gurung, Director of the National Library and Archives have been the inspiration and guiding force behind this project since its inception. Throughout the project period we have benefited from their advice, encouragement and guidance. We are most grateful to them.

The researchers for this book are: Gengop Karchung, Galey Wangchuk, Jigme Choden, Tshering Choki, Sonam Yudon, Sonam Yangdon and Yeshe Lhendub. Within the time limit imposed by many other commitments, they and various other members of our National Library family patiently journeyed to remote villages of almost all dzongkhags (districts), enduring many hardships along the way. Reaching their destinations, they gathered up information on both ICH activities still practiced today and also on those now forgotten except in the memories of village elders. Despite being neophytes in research, they were able to achieve the project goal. Our particular thanks are due to their commitment and meticulous work.

We would like to record our gratitude to the Dzongdas (District Administrators), Cultural Officers, Gups (heads of administrative blocks) and Tshogpas (Village Representatives), who provided every possible support and help to ease the path of our researchers in carrying out their important mission. Even more importantly, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to all bearers and custodians of our ICH, village community members who enthusiastically collaborated with our researchers and shared with us their knowledge and memories for recording and storing for future generations. Without their friendly understanding and support, this project could not possibly have been a success. We also relied on the valuable works of prominent researchers and scholars who have contributed significantly to studies of Bhutanese culture, especially its ICH. We express our deep thanks to them.

Warm thanks are due to professional educationist and former Director of Sherubtse College, Dr. Jagar Dorji, who patiently read through the draft report, attended to improvements in grammar, and also brought the content into a structurally unified form, to preclude the most obvious infelicities. Most of all, many thanks to Felicity Shaw for her meticulous copy editing and smoothing out of the text of the final draft, and her detailed checking of the bibliographies which follow each chapter to bring individual references into the approved format. The photographs scattered throughout the book were taken primarily by members of the

research teams. Some photos were provided by the following friends of the National Library, to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks for sharing: Karma Jigme (Cosmic Craft), Yeshe Dorji (Photographer), Felicity Shaw, Drungtsho Singye Wangmo (Physician at NITM), Royal Institute of Performing Arts (RIPA) and other individuals.

For remaining typos and mistakes, the authors hold full responsibility. Suggestions and comments on the text and on any perceived omissions, inaccuracies or oversights are most welcome and should be addressed to Dr. Yonten Dargye, Chief Research Officer.

In conclusion, we would like to place on record that until now nothing about the ICH of Bhutan encapsulating its entire spectrum of elements has been published. Our book is, therefore, a pioneer effort and we hope and believe that this contribution on our part will serve in some small measure to lay the groundwork for a full and less time-bound national inventory of ICH of Bhutan.

2 June, 2015

Research & Media Division
National Library & Archives of Bhutan
Department of Culture

INTRODUCTION

Background

From earliest times, Bhutan's topographic and climatic features greatly impacted its social organization, as natural valleys separated communities from one another in this small, landlocked country nestled in the Eastern Himalayas. These isolated valleys were linked to one another only by high mountain passes, and accordingly, each sub-region developed its own customs, traditions and folklore according to the particular environments and circumstances in which they lived. Many of these customs have remained practically untouched over the centuries.

Buddhism arrived in the region sometime in the 7th century, bringing with it a number of new practices that over time were assimilated into Bhutanese life. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel further refined these strands of Buddhist principles and ethics in the 17th century when he began unifying the valleys into what is now modern Bhutan. Since then, the rich culture and traditions of Bhutan, replete with Buddhist values and principles, have flourished throughout the country, shaping the arts, drama, architecture, literature and social structure of the nation as a whole. In essence, Bhutan's entire way of living centres on Buddhism.

Throughout the centuries Bhutan has remained a sovereign independent country, a fact often attributed to the strong cultural and religious identities engendered through its forefathers. Though small in size, population, and economic power, in terms of culture Bhutan is considered one of the richest nations today. We see our unique culture as the symbol of our unity, and of our national identity. Therefore, the Royal Government of Bhutan adopted preservation and promotion of cultural heritage as the Third Pillar of Bhutan's development philosophy, broadly termed as Gross National Happiness (GNH), which was first propounded in the early 1970s by His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan.

The philosophy of Gross National Happiness permeates every aspect of Bhutan's development policies. GNH provides a holistic approach to growth based on the concept that happiness requires spiritual development as well as material development, measures that are overlooked when focusing only on Gross National Product (GNP). It is believed that the people's well-being can best be achieved by promoting the development of spiritual and cultural values concurrently with initiatives oriented toward economic growth. GNH is consciously aimed at maintaining an ideal balance between material and spiritual development that benefits the body and spirit of Bhutanese society. GNH concepts and principles are thus applied to all national policies, acting as an umbrella that shelters all aspects of Bhutanese life.

Categories of Bhutanese Culture

It is difficult to define Bhutanese culture in a summary yet concrete manner. The Bhutanese term for culture is *lamsol* (*lam srol*), or 'following a path'; in this case, the customs and practices of our illustrious forefathers, religious and political leaders, and communities. For our purposes, 'culture' is used synonymously with 'civilization' as well as the idea that culture serves as a repository of human excellence, artistic achievement and as an individual pursuit of perfection that principally derives its inspiration from Buddhist doctrine and ethics.

As elsewhere, Bhutanese culture can be generally divided into tangible (*dnegos can lam srol*) and intangible (*dnegos med lam srol*) aspects. That which can be seen and touched, such as dzongs, houses, temples, art, and antiquities is termed tangible heritage, while those traditions and events that are conceptual or otherwise lack tangible form in themselves, like knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, song, music, drama, oral traditions,

festivals, and other such happenings that can be recorded but cannot be touched or interacted with, are categorized as intangible heritage.

Historically speaking, Bhutanese tangible and intangible cultures have sprung from two main sources: village communities and dzongs. Community-based cultures (*mi sde gnas stangs las brten byung ba'i lam srol*) are the diverse cultural elements that developed spontaneously depending on social needs and the specific environment in which the community members lived. The dzong- and monastery-based culture (*rdzong gzhi khag las brten byung ba'i lams srol*) is that which developed from government leaders, officials and monks who have resided primarily in the dzongs and monasteries. The dzong-based culture may be further divided into spiritual (*chos phyogs kyi lam srol*) and secular components (*srid phyogs kyi lam srol*). This is because since the 17th century, the dzongs have housed both the district monastic population and the secular administrators. Since both components ultimately have the same roots in Buddhist tradition, the dzongs have served as the centres of religious and civil administration, and by extension, of culture.

Bhutanese scholars divide the culture of Bhutan into the following four categories:

1. External objects (*phyi yul gyi lam srol*)
2. The culture of internal mind (*nang sems kyi lam srol*)
3. The culture of learning and education (*shes bya'i gnas kyi lam srol*)
4. The culture of conduct and character (*bya ba spyod lam gyi lam srol*)

External objects include those tangible items that can be seen and touched, such as dzongs, houses, statues, paintings, and so forth. The culture of the internal mind refers to that which cannot be perceived through the senses, for example, knowledge, attitude, beliefs, and skills. The culture of learning and education encompasses the cultivation of knowledge of the traditional sciences, such as arts and crafts, medical sciences, and astrology. The culture of conduct and character refers to conduct of the body, speech and mind: in other words, the reasons why we respect one other, the benefits of showing mutual respect and the negative effects of not doing so.

Of the four types, the cultures of external objects and of the internal mind are considered of prime importance, because they are comprised of tangible, physical objects and intangible aspects housed in one's mind. According to Bhutanese scholars, these two can encapsulate the entire culture and thus are the backbone — if not the source — of Bhutanese culture.

Evolution and Development of Bhutanese Intangible Culture

Though culture can be generally divided into tangible and intangible, at times these two are quite difficult to differentiate; they exist like the cause and effect of an entity. Take for example Bhutanese house construction. Till the house is fully completed, the site plan, design, workmanship, and the methods involved remain as an intangible in the mind of the carpenter. Similarly, sacred mask dances, or *cham*, often originate in the meditative visualizations of a saint. Until the dance is performed, the details of the movements and steps remain intangible in the mind of the saint. When the dance is being properly performed, the performer should be visualizing his body as that of a divine being, his speech to be the sound of sacred *mantras* and his mind in meditative state, all of which are equally intangible as qualities. Even those who view the performance are witnessing a manifestation of intangible culture. Cause and effect can also be seen during the creation phase of arts and crafts: until a bamboo basket is completed, the skills involved, such as where to source the bamboo, and how to cut it and weave it into the proper form, remain intangible, until the craftsman brings the basket into physical form.

The point here is that internal subjective values, when applied in the physical world through the creative process, are directly linked to our dynamic, external objective reality. Our internal knowledge, skills and experiences can determine what type of impact our lives can have on the external objective world. Thus, the intangible culture is the ultimate basis for and seed of all tangible culture objects. _

The circumstances and environments that have pervaded Bhutanese life define the peculiarities of Bhutan's Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ICH). In this context, it is necessary to analyse Bhutanese ICH while taking into account the dependences and mutual influence of territorial neighbours. For centuries, Bhutan has maintained relations with its territorial neighbours, India and Tibet, and has often exchanged cultural and artistic values with them. Further, Bhutanese ICH also draws on pre-Buddhist shamanistic practices. This peculiarity is expressed in various charms, spells, folklore, worship, festivals and rituals. During the long-ago spread of Vajrayana Buddhism in the region, Buddhist principles infused the indigenous Bhutanese mentality, customs, ceremonies and arts, which enriched and diversified Bhutanese intangible and tangible cultures, and gave them new value.

Bhutan has maintained independence throughout its history. There has never been a colonial presence in Bhutan, and accordingly there are comparatively few truly foreign elements that impacted the development of national ICH; there were no obstacles to its evolution, development, preservation or conservation. There have been a variety of forward steps regarding intangible culture throughout Bhutan's history. It could be argued that the heyday of ICH has come to fruition since the establishment of the monarchy in 1907. Under the benevolent rule of our great monarchs, Bhutanese folklore, art, oral traditions, rituals, customs, ceremonies, festivities, traditional technologies, and learning have flourished.

Bhutanese intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, constantly evolves and renews itself with the passage of time, thereby providing a community with a sense of identity and continuity. Accordingly, it promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. Of course, intangible culture has undergone changes and development from period to period, but its value to the people has remained intact and to them, valid. It remains a living tradition that is largely held in the minds and psychology of our people, and is conveyed through different vehicles. Intangible phenomena reflect and express the varied circumstances of our nation's history, and the differing perspectives of its ethnic groups and communities, and further provide accounts of their evolution and development. Thus, Bhutan's national cultural heritage, particularly its ICH, could be seen as evidence of "creative industry". In another words, ICH is an expression of a uniquely Bhutanese creative pattern of thought and could be seen as vital for progress and development.

Objectives of the ICH Documentation Project

Intangible cultural heritages are an important legacy shared by all of humankind, carried in the creative thoughts of peoples throughout the world. There have been active discussions in the global community that focus on the need to recognise and respect diverse cultures in this age of globalization. In particular, the importance of preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage that comprise the roots of cultural identities have been gaining attention around the world.

In today's world, elements of ICH are under constant threat. In particular, languages and oral traditions are the most endangered. ICH cannot be recovered once it has been lost. There is an old African saying, "When an old person dies, a library burns to the ground". Yet these days, due to aging practitioners and the lack of students to learn these languages, or the traditional arts and crafts, much of Bhutan's ICH is facing extinction. Thus, we must act urgently to preserve and promote our intangible heritage.

As Bhutan enters into the development mainstream, change is inevitable in the face of globalization and urbanization. The space formerly occupied by ICH is undergoing dramatic change. Modern global culture is gaining ground in Bhutan, with mixed results. There have been some positive impacts as a result of television programming and increased interactions with foreign cultures, especially where livelihood issues are concerned, but these forces are also having a negative impact on Bhutan's own culture and traditions. In response to these new challenges, ways of thinking are gradually changing. Cultural shifts that are adversely affecting society include urbanization, globalization, popular culture, modern education, and tourism.

As the younger generation is shaped by modern education, the festivals, folklore, and oral traditions are losing their historical importance, disrupting the chain of transmission and thus threatening to undermine the essence of practices. Every developing nation or community is faced with this problem, yet it is a matter of great concern. A common solution must be sought in order to avoid the pitfalls that would inevitably result from uncritically embracing "the new" at the expense of traditional practices that have evolved over a long period of time. At the same time, there is also a need to present the traditional practices in a way that is in keeping with the times, so that youth will value them and take pride in them as part of a long and rich cultural heritage.

The Royal Government of Bhutan has policies in place that seek to protect and promote our age-old culture and traditions. But however sound and healthy the government's policies are, it is difficult to maintain successful promotion and preservation of traditional spiritual values in the face of an ever-increasing population, and amidst the growing influence of globalization with its trend of assimilating other cultures and traditions. This is a mammoth and challenging task for the government.

In the hopes of stemming the tide, the erstwhile National Assembly had adopted a series of resolutions to preserve and promote spiritual and cultural values in successive five-year plans. Specifically, it had sought to provide a legal framework for the promotion of language and culture, art and architecture, documentation and inventorying of artefacts, performing arts, textiles, sports, and the traditional code of ethics.

In continuation of those efforts, Bhutan's constitution fully protects the country's cultural heritage. Parliamentary resolutions on cultural preservation and promotion have led to development of plans and programmes, and now both governmental and non-governmental agencies, private agencies, and individuals are carrying out ICH-related documentation and research through a variety of means. The mechanisms to accomplish this are equally varied, and include written documentation, photography, video and audio recording, workshops, seminars, contests, exhibitions and festivals. These efforts are indeed commendable, but much, much more remain to be done.

Survey Methodology

In 2005, the Royal Government of Bhutan ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (the Convention). However, the Government is yet to establish a national inventory of ICH as per the obligations laid out in the Convention. As part of the continuing efforts to safeguard ICH in Bhutan and toward the full implementation of the Convention, the Department of Culture (which serves as national focal point for many fields that constitute ICH) proposed, in association with the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP), a project for the development of a national information system of ICH in Bhutan. Although the project was originally scheduled for a duration of two years and four months (Sept 2011–Dec 2013), it was extended by a further year as the report compilation, translation, writing, and editing were delayed due to technical problems.

Before travelling to the research/documentation site, questionnaires were framed based on those provided by the ICHCAP office in order to obtain an appropriate and consistent data set. Next, after discussions with the District Cultural Officer (DCO), the particular gewogs (blocks) that were to be visited and surveyed were identified. At the district level, preliminary discussions were held with the DCO as well as other knowledgeable people in order to gain an overall picture of the community in question. After these initial discussions, the research teams travelled to the selected sites.

The Gup (head of a block) and the village Tshogpa (representative) appointed guides to the teams, and in some cases, the Tshogpa himself accompanied the research team throughout the visit, acting as an interpreter and introducing researchers to the community. We must acknowledge here the competence and dedication of the guides, from whose knowledge and assistance we greatly benefited. The guides were provided as a direct result of messages sent in advance from Dzongdas (District Administrators) to Gups and Gewog Administrative Officers (GAOs), for which we remain deeply thankful.

The field trips were undertaken by car as far as possible, but most travel was made on foot as the communities and villages to be surveyed were in far-flung areas. Many visits included overnight stays in the villages and several hours of walking in the daytime. Heartfelt thanks are offered to the Gups, Tshogpas, and GAOs for providing us with every possible support — lodging, guides, etc. — during the visits. Researchers met with community members of various ages though in general only the most experienced and knowledgeable village men and women were invited to contribute data. This was done through various informal talks but mainly through directed interviews with individuals who had practical experience of ICH matters in their own area.

The data collected from primary sources through interactions, interviews and field observations were noted in standard notebooks. Cameras and video/audio recording equipment were used to document local social and cultural activities, oral traditions, folklore and songs. Once back from the field, the authors/researchers consulted and referred to a number of secondary sources, mainly books and documents that deal with the cultural life of Bhutan, to crosscheck and analyse field data.

Plan of Presentation

UNESCO has categorised ICH into five domains, but because intangible cultural elements are diverse in each nation, each member country has the liberty to categorise their own domains of intangible culture as they see fit. The present report follows the same five domains as the UNESCO categorization, and also includes an introduction and a glossary. Each chapter has its own bibliography appended to it. The introduction includes a general overview of Bhutanese culture and ICH as relating to historical antecedents and of the contemporary situation of ICH in Bhutan.

Chapter I presents the oral tradition in Bhutan; specifically its languages and dialects, as well as the proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, narrations, poetry, epic narratives in prose and verse forms, charms, prayers, chants, songs, and dramatic performances that surveys indicate are under particular threat of extinction.

Chapter II gives an account of Bhutan's performing arts and traditional games. In particular, it presents types of ritual mask dances: *tsun cham* (performed exclusively by monks), *boecham* (performed solely by lay people), and regional mask dances. Further, the chapter enumerates types of folk dances: *zhungdra*, the classical dance; *boedra*, the court songs of medieval period; *rigsar*, the folk-based modern songs; and *zhay*, the dance of heroes and also information on local musical instruments and ritual instruments. The second part of the chapter deals with traditional games and sports, and provides a comprehensive survey of these, including detailed accounts of the rules for each.

Chapter III describes the traditional customs, rituals, ceremonies and festive events that give meaning and essence to Bhutanese ways of life. An attempt has been made to provide an account of all types of ceremonies, tradition and customs, social practices, religious rites, festivals and celebrations as practiced by different ethnic groups and communities across the country.

Chapter IV presents — to the farthest extent possible — descriptions and lists of folk knowledge and technology that comprise formal traditional medicinal practices, local healing practices, folk meteorology, arithmetic, astrology and astronomical knowledge, traditional measurements, folk beliefs, and superstitions. It also describes traditional household and economic knowledge, and traditional foods and beverages.

Chapter V describes traditional craftsmanship, comprised primarily of the codified set of thirteen arts and crafts practiced in Bhutan that occupy and employ many Bhutanese craftspeople. Additionally, other forms of arts and crafts outside the thirteen are discussed in this chapter, such as bone working, leather working, traditional boot-making, pottery and calligraphy, all of which have played essential roles in Bhutanese society.

Bhutan's ICH project was time bound, and because of this the research teams could not be expected to survey entire districts; rather, the survey focused on those gewogs and communities that demonstrated unique intangible cultural practices and beliefs. Communities that shared similar practices were not included in this initial survey. Time and travel constraints did not allow the researchers to stay long-term in villages to make participatory observation. Each of these communities and others not yet surveyed would benefit greatly from additional time, which would enable the researchers to have a more immersive participation-observation experience to document all aspects of the community's way of life, their beliefs and practices, and the impacts of Bhutan's changing socio-economic situation. Conditions, therefore, were not ideal to provide a comprehensive evaluation of how individual villages were observing their traditional heritage practices, and the social interaction patterns that were driving their communities.

This project report therefore provides only a partial view of the myriad varieties of ICH to be found, documented and studied in Bhutan. With nineteen languages and local dialects — and a variety of different ethnic groups, there are hundreds of communities and villages across the country awaiting meaningful study. But we will not stop here. We have taken the initiative under the auspices of ICHCAP towards the development of a national inventory, and we will continue the survey and documentation processes in order to achieve the goal of a full national inventory of ICH, as per the obligations laid out in the Convention. Further, it is our foremost goal to safeguard and raise national awareness of ICH and to ensure that the flow of knowledge from our ancestors continues its transmission into the future.

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ORAL TRADITIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

Bhutan's intangible cultural heritage has been preserved in a wide variety of oral expressions such as proverbs, riddles, folktales, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dance, drama and prose. This invaluable heritage has been passed down to us from our ancestors as knowledge, cultural practices, social values and collective memories, and it is our responsibility to keep it alive for our future generations.

This research has revealed that certain forms of oral expressions are common among different communities while there are others unique to a particular group. The current study focuses mainly on those elements that are on the verge of or likely to be disappearing in the near future.

1.1. LANGUAGES & DIALECTS OF BHUTAN

In Bhutan, various languages and dialects have been in use as a tool for communication and co-existence, and these have evolved over many generations. Although Bhutan is a small country, there is a wide variety of rich linguistic and cultural diversity, in fact so wide that is said to even embarrass the Monsoon Dragon with its loud roar. Language experts George van Driem and Karma Tshering say (van Driem 1998) that with a population of just about three quarters of a million Bhutan has 19 dialects that are still in active use.

There is a wide range of languages spoken in the fifty four different countries of the Asian region. These languages have been classified into thirteen major groups namely:

1. Sino Tibetan, 2. Indo European, 3. Altaic families, 4. Mon Khmer, 5. Tai kadai, 6. Austronesian, 7. Dravidian, 8. Semitic, 9. Siberian families, 10. Caucasian families, 11. Small families of Southern Asia, 12. Creoles and Pidgins, 13. Sign languages.

The languages and dialects spoken in Bhutan belong in the Sino Tibetan group under the Burman sub-group derived from Sino Tibetan, mainly falling under Central Bodish and East Bodish, where they may be further classified as follows:

The Central Bodish languages, comprising:

1. Dzong kha, 2. Chho cha nga cha kha, 3. Brokpa ke, 4. Dakpa kha, 5. Brok kat, 6. La kha, 7. Laya kha, 8. Lunapai kha and 9. Bjobi kha.

The East Bodish languages, comprising:

1. Bumthang kha, 2. Kheng kha, 3. Kurtoep kha, 4. Chhali kha, 5. Zala kha, 6. Nyen kha, and 7. Ole kha.

The other languages that do not belong to the two sub-groups but are classified under Tibeto-Burman language groups are:

1. Tshangla kha, 2. Lhopu kha, 3. Gongdue kha, and 4. Lepcha kha.

Beside these languages, Indo-Aryan languages like Nepali are used as medium of communication along the southern border region of the country. Karma Phuntsho (2013), clearly mentions there are some minor dialects spoken along the southern foothills which are not included in any group, as follows:

1. Rai, 2. Kurus/Adivasi, 3. Limbu / Subbha, 4. Mongar / Ghaley, 5. Sherpa, 6. Tamang, 7. Gurung, 8. Newar / Pradhan.

According to Tashi Tshewang (2013) all the languages and dialects spoken in Bhutan can be grouped according to region:

1. Eastern region: Mostly Tshangla kha, Chali kha, Cho cha nga cha kha, Brokpa ke or Merak and Sakteng kha, Dakpa kha, Zala/Brami/Khoma kha, Kurtoep kha and Gongduk kha.
2. Southern region: Widely spoken - Nepali, Rai, Kurus/Adivasi, Limbu or Subbha, Mongar and Ghaley, Sherpa, Tamang, Lepcha, Gurung, and Newar or Pradhan kha.
3. Western region: Commonly Ngalong kha, Lhopu kha and Oley kha.
4. North region: Laya kha, Lunana kha, Boe kha, Lingzhi kha, La kha or Sephu kha and Brok kat,
5. Central region: Kheng kha, Mangde kha, Nyen kha, Bumthang kha, Kurtoep kha and Mon kha.

Since there are Tibetan settlers in some parts of the country, the Tibetan language or Boe kha is also included as one of the languages of Bhutan. In addition to the above there is the sign language taught in Drakthso

schools, *Sang kha* (code language used mainly by the Armed Forces to establish their identity especially in the evening) and the code languages invented by youth (mainly girls) for private communication. In Tshangla dialect this is called *Gum-nang lo*, meaning reversed or twisted language, reflecting that the words used are sometimes reversed or repeated within a sentence. Lastly there is *Aloi kha* or child language.

Dzongkha, the principal dialect of the eight western districts of Bhutan, has been in use within the administrative system since the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Commanding orders of 1st Desi Tenzin Drugey and lyrical ballads of Gelong Sumdar Tashi, Pemi Tshewang Tashi and other records like taxation and receipts and other records are maintained in Bhutanese cursive writing, *joyig*, a script that dates back to before the 10th century. As the dzongs were the centres of both temporal and religious affairs, the

language used by monks and the officials came to be known as Dzongkha or language of the dzong.

In 1967 scholar-monk, Pema Tshewang (subsequently Director of the National Library 1973-1993) was assigned to the textbook division of the Education Department, where he played a major role in the development of Dzongkha, which hitherto had lacked a written form, to enable its adoption as a written language. In 1971 Bhutan's 3rd king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck declared Dzongkha the national language of Bhutan. Apart from Dzongkha, Tibetan and Nepali have their own scripts.

The Table below provides a general view of the usage of different languages and dialects in Bhutan reflected in researches conducted by the Royal Government and private individuals.

Examples of the usage of languages in Bhutan

Region	Language/dialect	Way of speaking
National Language	Dzongkha	Choe gi ming ga chi mo?
	Tshangla	Nan ga ming hang ya?
	Chali	E ming de wa?
	Cho ca nga ca kha	Khyoe ki ming chi lo?
	Merak sakteng?	Khyoe gi ming chi lo?
	Dakpakha/Zala/Brami/Khoma	E ku ming zi lo?
	Kurtoep	Wae ming zhe yo?
East	Ngalung	Choe gi ming ga chi mo?
	Oleykha	Ing gi ming a de la?
West	Laya and Lunana	Choe gi ming ga chi mo/ga chem?
	Lingzhi	Choe gi ming ga chi mo/ga chem?
	Lakha	Khyuk ming chi lo?
	Sephu	Khyong gi ming chi lo?
	Brok-kad	Khyoe ming chi yo?
	Boekha	Khyoe rang gi ming gang yin/re?
North	Nepali	Tim ro nam kay wo?
	Tamang	Ae la ming te go?
	Rai	Am ko nung de wo?
	Subbha and Limbu	He man me ma wo?
	Gurung	Extinct
	Mongar	Na ko me ming ye wo?
	Lepcha	A dho abreyang shu bu?
	Lhopu	Na ning heta ho?
	Kurus/Adivasi	Tu nar nam ki?
	Sherpa	Khyoe re ming khang yin?
South	Kheng	We che ming ja yo?
	Gungduk	Ge ming sa po?
	Mangde	Weche ming zhe yo?
	Bumthang	We ming zha yo?
	Nyenkha	Ye ming she lo?
	Kurtoep	Wey ming zhe yo?
	Mon	Ing gi ming zhe yo?

1.2. ORAL TRADITIONS WITH MELODIES

1.2.1. Oral Poetry

Generally, it is considered a virtue if one pleases the mind of the root teacher or an elderly person or the leader of the land. This can be done by making eight types of offerings, one of which is the offering of music accompanied by melodious *lu* or songs in praise of the respected ones. This is often called the offering of praising the body with melodious verses, music and dancing. *Lu* is simply converting the verses to vocal sounds accompanied by music and sung without the movement of body or any parts of the body.

Lugar drosom means folk dance, which is a display of vocal music along with the movements of arms and feet depicting six types of awareness of melodies. These are: 1. transformation of high pitch to low; 2. rapid movement from high to low pitch; 3. raising the pitch; 4. lowering the pitch; 5. singing in a very deep voice, and 6. singing in a very high-pitched voice. This way of singing with vocal tunes is called *lu*. Both *lu* and *gurma* (devotional songs) are mostly written in *choekey* (classical religious language) and inflated with symbols and metaphors to convey messages.

Internally, songs can be classified into *gurma* (devotional song), *mani lu* (the mantra of Chenrezig vocalised in song), *tsangmo* (poetry) and *lozey* (ballad or verses

used in verbal exchanges). Songs which cannot be accompanied by the movement of hands and feet are also included in *lu*.

There are different types of mani songs, as follows: 1. *Mani dang chigma*, 2. *Mani dang nyima*, 3. *Mani dang summa*, 4. *Mani thuje chenmo*, 5. *Bardo Mani* 6. *Tsho dhana kosha*, 7. *Salho nub*, 8. *Lhonub ngayab*, 9. *Shomo yarsho*, and 10. *Tashi dang*. Amongst these, some are only sung for the purification of a deceased person's soul and others are sung just in order to accumulate merit.

1.2.1.1. Devotional Songs

Gurma comprise a mixture of verses and prose composed by persons who visualize the essence of truth as a result of their devotions in order to inspire others by both the meaning and the melody. Other terms used for this genre are *gurma*, *sung gur* and *nyam gur*.

Although *gurma*s are not properly classified, there are also spiritual songs like *thol-lu* (songs dedicated to dharma) which arise naturally from the inborn talents of sublime beings. Such songs are mainly composed on the spot depending upon the situation and the mood of the composer. Great lamas and saints compose lyrics



and songs, bearing in mind that their compositions ultimately contribute to human happiness and increase faith in the Dharma. The songs can be in praise of the root *guru* (teacher), a description of a sacred retreat cave, an aid to development of realisation, advice to followers and a motivation to the lay people. Amongst numerous spiritual songs, those composed by the Great Yogi Jetsun Milarepa (1052-1135) are very popular for their melodies and attractive lyrics, whereas those of Lama Drukpa Kuenley are satiric of the social and religious customs of his time.

A *gurma* sung by Milarepa to the benefactor and the proprietors of Ragmo in Tibet is given below (Ruepai Gyaltshen 1999, translated from the Chockey):

The sacred place of Jangchub Dzong;
Lofty white coloured Mountain of *Lha tsen* (local deity)
above;
Magnanimous devotees dwell in the lower valley;
The snow clad mountain blocks from behind;
The front is filled with wish fulfilling forests;
Meadows wide and spacious;
From the odorous charming *Pema* (Lotus);
Come buzzing sound from the six legged *bung wa* (bees);

From the temporarily formed ponds;
Emerge water birds watching with stretched neck;
On the expanded branches of trees;
Beautiful birds produce melodious songs;
While touched by the passing breeze;
At the boughs display their dances;
On the taller trees opening out;
Monkeys exhibit different acrobatic skills;
In the wide open meadows;
Four legged beings graze everywhere;
The herders, who look after them;
Their melodious songs and flutes transform;
Workers of the samsaric existence;
Spread everywhere with their chaotic activities;
I *Yogi* (hermit), who watches over these;
On the all clear precious cliff;
Guided by the transient aspect (of the world);
Meditating on the river like illusory pleasure;
Seeing the present life as a magical illusion;
Feeling sorry for those who do not realise;
As food, [I] consume the emptiness;
Contemplating without distraction,
Anything can rise to a diverse mood;
Alas! The phenomena of this cyclic existence;
To imagine the non-existence is amazing.



1.2.1.2. Songs

As mentioned above, a *lu* (song) transforms words into melody. A song is sometimes sung in a way which is very like the way *gurma* is sung. *Lu* are often composed in order to present the mood of a particular situation and sung without movement of the body. While generally rather longer than a four-line stanza, there is no standard length in the *lu*.

Lu are classified as *Choe drel gi lu* (religious songs) and *Jigten phelpai lu* (common folk song)

While singing religious songs, the singer kneels down on the floor with both palms folded against the chest showing gestures of respect, worship and paying tribute to one's root guru or those of noble birth. Besides songs composed by Jetsun Milarepa, some of the religious songs are those found in the biographies of Khadro Drowa Zangmo, Azhi Nangsa Oebum, King Norzang and Queen Yethro Lham, Gelongma Pelmo, Prince Dri-med Kunden, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo, Drukpa Kuenley, Gesar of Ling, Kheu Pema Oebar, Daelog Karma Wangzin, and Daelog Sangay Chodzom etc.. The songs presented during the performance of *raksha mangcham* (mask dance showing the consequences of one's deeds after death).

Common folk songs usually reveal the romantic mood between a lover and his beloved. The singer may keep his or her palms cupping the chin while singing. Examples of common folk songs are displayed by dance performers during the *tshechus* (mask dance festivals) by singing love songs between the *pholay* and *molay* as they meet. There are tragic lovers such as Alu Penjor from Wang Dalung and his beloved Goensa Lham, Gasa Lamai Sengge and his beloved Galem from Chang village (in Punakha), Bada Chenmai Rigzin and her lover Namgye Phuntsho from Upper Ruebaisa and the sad songs of Yudring Zangmo when she was forcefully betrothed to a man she never loved. There are songs derived from stories of a cow called Ba Gachu Lhamo. *Alao* and *Khoray* from the eastern part of Bhutan, *Ausa* of Paro, Wawa of Haa district and *Katsom* (alphabetical songs) also fall into this category.

1.2.1.2.1. Spiritual Songs

A song based on alphabetical order sung by Khadro Drowa Zangmo to King Kala Wangpo from the mythical biography of **Khadro Drowa Zangmo**:

The King sings to Drowa Zangmo:

The charming lotus of the gods;
Oh! Graceful Queen, please take heed to me;
There is no essence in it looking from every direction;
I have deep faith towards the sacred doctrine;
In the serene temple of refuge;
Let me meditate just like a hermit;
In the palatial residence prosperous in all desires;
Raising two innocent and healthy prince and princess;
You, Drowa Zangmo the embodiment of White Tara;
Came forth to meet the mother and child;
Give a break to the practice of Dharma;
My youthful elegant lady, please bear this in mind.

Drowa Zangmo's response to the King:

Please! Listen to me, my heroic King;
I had no authority to stay with my parents;
Like a cow, tied with rope on its head;
Like a ewe taken out of its flock;
The eight fearsome heat and cold as in Tsa-ri (sacred place);
The heat radiation of the demoness having arrived in this place;
If Your Majesty practices Dharma leaving the family behind;
Only this will lead you to the path of enlightenment;
There is no meaning in being a profound King;
Even if you have plenty of food and drinks;
If Dharma is not practised in good time;
Sinful people when in the Court of Yama;
Like nanny goats and sheep together dragged;
Across mountains and valleys when arrived at slaughter house;
Even in the presence of affectionate spouse;
On this earth mother and child will be heartbroken;
On the day when Ha-chang the demon consumes mother and children;
[thus] Mother will not stay but leave for the celestial realm.

1.2.1.2.2. Laity Songs

A melancholic song sung by ba ga chu lham (a cow) to her master Ap Dondup from the legend of **ba gachu lham**:

Dondup, my owner! Please, listen to me;
Enjoyable winter has come to an end;
The gloomy spring has spontaneously begun;
Like burning fire, the heat rises up from the Indian plains;
Diverse blossoms appear on dry slopes;
From the tree tops melancholy songs by the birds are sung;

The muddy river spoils the dwellings of the fish;
 The mouths of blood thirsty flies and leeches are more
 painful than spears;
 My daughter Thrinley's feet are softer than silk;
 The melancholy voice of Pel Dzom singing wa wa song;
 I find it uneasy to remain on this earth;
 The heavenly geese of Tibet, the land of great mountains,
 Unable to bear the chilly breeze of autumn
 Spreading all over in the plains of India,
 Now could not stay in the homes they made in the lotus
 like plains;
 Leaving behind their chicks with fledgling wings,
 With my words of assurance to the Mermaid,
 Flew back towards the mountainous country of Tibet.
 We humans and cattle, together
 In this land of medicinal herbs, the celestial realms of
 Paro,
 Let's go past the gardens of the colourful palace;
 Let's go and enjoy the nutritious grass on the highland
 meadows;
 Let's go and see His Excellency Kuzho (of Paro).

1.2.1.2.3. Alphabetical Songs

There are also alphabetical songs composed by knowledgeable and creative country folks in various languages and dialects. An individual ka-tsom may be about hardships, happiness and love or may give valuable advice, depending on the situation. For example, I present here a ka tsom from Kheng district, which is widely sung by the people of Wamling village, Zhemgang. The "*Kawa namning lingpa*," Ka-tsom throws light on the nature of taxation during the ancient days.

As eagle glided in the sky;
 The hen became restless on the earth;
 Unable to be happy or sad;
 [Thus] I am made to cry;
 A hen, left without anything;
 After the falcon has taken entirely
 Carried away towards the Indian plains;
 And eaten voraciously and maliciously;
 Thinking of going to see it;
 But, couldn't finish my weaving;
 This year, a hen has been taken;
 Next year, the tax will be exempted.

Although there should be 30 lines, but there are hardly any elderly people who can remember the remaining 18 verses. Similarly, there are other Ka-tsoms in Dzongkha and Tshangla kha and maybe other dialects too, but these were composed later by teachers and students

after the modern education system was introduced to Bhutan. They generally have romantic themes.

1.2.2. Lyrical Ballad

Lozey (lyrical ballad or witty narratives) is a form of oral expression, appropriately described as one of the ornaments of speech. According to the accounts of elderly citizens in the western districts, the origin of lozey goes back to the 12th century coinciding with the arrival of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo (1148-1251). Often known as Togden Phajo, he was a Tibetan saint whose life and deeds are closely linked with the initial spread of the Drukpa School of teachings in Bhutan in accordance with the prophesy of Tsangpa Gyare (1161-1211), the founder of the Drukpa Kagyud Lineage. Phajo Drugom Zhigpo was followed by numerous Tibetan scholars who disseminated the teachings of the Buddha. Amongst these realised beings Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651) was the destined leader. He instituted the traditions based on the Buddhist values of *mi-choe tsangma chudrug* (sixteen virtues for mundane practice) and reformed the old traditions, resulting in establishment of the dual system of government in Bhutan, whereby a temporal ruler coexists with the spiritual authority of the nation.

Amongst those indigenous traditions, the songs *parshing mindru gyelmo* and *Zurchen gyi sheypa* are the most popular in Bhutan and are sung especially during the construction of typical Bhutanese house made of rammed earth. These age old songs are solely sung by the people of central and western Bhutan. Parshing Mindru Gyelmo is an honorific name given to the wooden tools used for ramming earth, therefore the tools are respected and revered as an embodiment of Khandro Sonam Peldon, consort of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. The song has many verses inviting the Parshing Mindru Gyelmo to visit from Tibet and concludes with



propitious words of seeing her off back to Tibet during the consecration ceremony for the new house. Similarly, *Zurchen gi sheypa* (song sung during the installation of four phalluses on the four eaves of the house facing the four directions) is also sung on the day of the consecration ceremony. Two groups are formed for the singing of the songs, normally separate groups for males and females. There are often verbal skirmishes between the male and female groups.

A quick-witted and verbally eloquent person may compose appropriate verses of response on the spot based on the nature of the opponents' song. It is said that the verses of these songs are so long, "if sung till the end, it is believed that it could last for almost a day" as told by a few elderly citizens. There have been incidents in the past when the host family had to place a large *palla* (bamboo container) of *ara* (distilled home brew) down and request the verbally warring songsters to reconcile. However, these songs are actually a type of ballad or narrative poem to which a melody was added later. The recitation of lozey is still widely practised in the western part of Bhutan and is regarded as an entertainment and enjoyment by one and old alike.

There are variants of given names for lozey, sometimes it is also written as *Losel*, but, there is no clue why, since both terms have their separate sets of definitions. According to Lopon Kunzang Thinley, chief researcher at KMT Press, Thimphu, lozey is an art of speech which requires a unique skill in making rapid response. It requires constant flow like the hair on a horse's neck, thus, the term 'lo' means statement and 'ze' refers to the neck hair, and in this context to the brilliance of the bantering back and forth. Lozey is defined as brilliant, intelligent, clever and bright. In both Dzongkha and Tibetan dictionaries, lozey is defined as any prompt statement constructed in verse well decorated with rhetorical qualities of similes and metaphors according to the situation. Such qualities can only be attributed to intelligent, quick-thinking and witty persons.

Lozey is an exceptional oral expression of Bhutan and very popular among the people of western Bhutan, namely Ha, Paro, Thimphu, Gasa, Punakha, Wangduephodrang and Dagana, and in the northern part of Trongsa district. However, the lozey of each district has its own unique characteristics in style, language tone and recitation tune.

Lozey is not sung merely to entertain the crowd. It is also a platform to showcase inborn talents in the art of speech and also acts as a medium for transmission of the

tradition to the others. Lozey is of three kinds: popular *lozey* (which consist various subject and episodes occur depending on the moods and feelings), *lojue lozey* (a narrative, usually of epic dimension), and finally *lozey labja* (lozey associated with advice and guidance). Therefore, most often lozey dwells within these episodes; *che toed* (praising), *nyen lu* or *zalu* (romantic), *dralu* (odium), *medlu* (disgrace), *trolu* (joyful), *cholu* (sad), *tse tshol* (debating/challenging), *trashu/monlu* (supplication) and *lozey labja* (advice/guidance). *Lozey labja* is sometimes identical to *kortam* (innuendo or indirect statement).

Lozey has no fixed length, but may be long or short, which entirely depends upon the depth of knowledge of a person, but generally the shortest will vary from three lines to fifteen. Short lozey are called *lozey do thum* while long ones are called *lozey jun-ringm*. However, loju lozey are historical accounts and regarded as the longest and some lojue lozey are accounts drawn from oral tradition of how the fortresses were constructed by Zhabdrung Nawang Namgyal.

These days long lozey can be found mainly as lyrics written in books, but some are still being kept alive through oral recitation, of which the following are examples:

A lozey recited by one Kakuru, secretary to Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861), lozey on *Garp* (attendant to a high official) Lung Gi Khorlo's journey to Punakha and Wangduephodrang districts to distribute official letters of Choetse penlop, *Gelong* (monk) Sumdha Trashi of Sha Nyisho, *Zimpon* (chamberlain) Tshewang Trashi of Sha Kazhi, *Jam* (maidservant) Tshewang Pedroe of Shar Phangyuel and finally the lozey of *Choep* (religious practitioner) Sangag Dorje, Chungdue Gongshed and Akhe Gyem of Ha district. These are stories centred on characters whose experiences tell us a great deal about social and economic conditions during their times.

Sometimes lozey can be used as means of debate or verbal skirmishes between people of different communities or villages, and between male and female. At least two participants are required for a lozey. After one has recited the initial verse, the other responds depending on the gist of the preceding verse. This is called *Lozey khajew* (lozey competition) in Dzongkha. While reciting lozey, the rules are very simple. Depending on the type, if the opponent has good knowledge, he/she must respond with the same similes and metaphors that were used by the other. The challenge will continue until a winner or a draw is declared. In both cases, messages will be conveyed through eloquent usage of metaphors and symbols. The

responses are never direct. Nevertheless, lozey can be used for both entertainment and wish-making in every aspect of life such as: *Parshing gi she pa*, *Zurchen gi she pa*, *Dha she* (description of Arrow), *Gishey* (description of Sword), *Zo she* (description of an Art), *Shog da kuelwa* (encouraging words while dragging large logs or boulders), *Lang key* (Praising words to the Oxen while ploughing), *Che sho* (making wishes while sowing seeds) and *Bab she* (wish-making while threshing rice) etc. A person who has the knowledge and skills is known as *kham khe gyep* (King of eloquence or an articulate person) in Dzongkha.

The following are some examples of lozey recited to fit different moods and occasions:

1.2.2.1. Praising

Bearing the fruit of virtuous deeds of numerous eons,
The two protectors Dharmakaya and Sambhogakaya,
Having realised and credence of none other than self,
[I] prostrate with due respect to Guru Padmasambhava.

Emanation of a thousand protective Buddhas,
Gracious to the entire southern universe,
The glorious Dharma King, Thuchen Ngawang
(Zhabdrung),
I pay homage with my three doors (body, speech and mind).

This day of the auspicious month,
Youthful, I feel at ease to recite a ballad.
Though I don't have a melodious voice and words,
[I] make this offering of melody to the Glorious Drukpa
(Zhabdrung).

All the people! Please, lend me your ears,
To make an earthen house of southern Drukpa;
One has to prepare the means of auspiciousness right
from the beginning;
One has to initiate the parade of songs and dances.

Towards the northern side of Bodhgaya, India,
In Nepal, the land of sumptuousness,
Between the elevated sky and clouds;
Dwell the five Tshering sisters, the deities of wealth;

These five Tshering sisters, Vasudevas,
Are the war deities, if powerful officials seek blessings of power,
Are the gods of wealth, if people seek blessings of wealth,
Are the gods of speech, if youth seek eloquence and a pleasing voice.

Amidst the gathering of people,
Let me plant the doctrine of songs and dances.

1.2.2.2. Romantic Songs

Having visited all the magnificent fortresses, boe garpa
(court attendant)
Committed to return after three years.
Not returning after three years,
Does the mighty lord own his body?
Or is his heart possessed by a lady of the country?
I, the maiden of the village,
Have to decide for myself.
The cool breeze having explored the Tibetan country
Promised to return after three years.
Not returning after three years,
Is the body now owned by the Dharma King,
Or attracted towards a deceiver?
Even though captivated by the emanated Dharma King;
Or attracted towards the deceiver;
These leaves of the cypress of the south;
Have to decide for myself now.
You, mighty river, have been to the land of India,
Assured to come back after three years.
Not returning after three years,
Is your body controlled by the King of India?
Or fascinated by the Indian girls?
Whether he is controlled by the Indian King,
[Or] fascinated by the Indian girls,
I, the golden eyed fish,
Have to decide for myself now.

1.2.2.3. Odium

(Provoking statement)

Drinking from Dangchu River will not cause melodious voice;
If it becomes melodious after drinking from Dangchu,
The watermill owner of Sha Dangchu,
Her voice might have changed into a flute.

Consuming milk and curd will not make the face charming;
If it becomes charming by consuming milk and curd,
You, the highland lady wearing *taari* (tiger-striped) kira,
Your face would have a celestial appearance.

(Answer)

If drinking the Dangchu River doesn't cause melodious voice,
By the Sha Dangchu watermill owner
Having offered the first share of water to the gods above,

Then Tsheringma divine goddess of music
 Will bestow the blessing of a tuneful voice;
 If the blessings of speech are bestowed,
 There will be no control over the sweetness of the voice.
 If having milk and curd, doesn't make the face fair,
 Of the highland lady wearing her taari,
 Having offered the first share of the milk to the gods
 above,
 Then Tshringma the divine goddess of music,
 Will bestow the blessing of charm.
 If the blessing of charm is bestowed,
 Fairness of appearance cannot be measured.

1.2.2.4. Discreditable

To hoist prayer flags on the meeting of three ridges,
 Both the ridges and wind are in disharmony;
 From where can [I] hoist the prayer flags?
 The hoisted flags are not fluttered by the wind;
 Even the blowing wind is of no help;
 Better not hoist the prayer flags there in the first place.
 With this as an example,
 To make a bridge at the confluence of three rivers below,
 But the rivers and valley are in discord;
 Where should the bridge be situated?
 Neither is there traffic once the bridge is made,
 Nor does it benefit the flow of traders,
 Better stop building the bridge from the start.
 Keeping this as an example,
 You the maiden of the village,
 Love is not in harmony with being a spouse,
 Due to lack of fidelity inwardly,
 The destiny to be together has perished outwardly.
 With you the maiden devoid of faith,
 Better it is to give up before we start loving;

(This is also spoken by a girl to a hopeful suitor)

1.2.2.5. Rhapsody

A hill that provides a clear view,
 A hill that is much taller,
 Looking from the lofty hill
 On the path of circumambulating the divine Indian
 tree.
 Heard of a tree being grown,
 Thinking what the tree was like,
 It is none other than wish fulfilling pagsam joenshing. (a
 mythical tree)
 On that tree there is a bird perched.
 Thinking what is that bird?
 It was none other than the handsome a-ley buthri (a
 migratory bird from the south)

It sits with its right wing towards the east,
 Inviting the Sun from the east.
 Facing its left wing towards the west,
 Appealing to the Moon from the west,
 Its tail is pointed to India,
 To invoke prosperity from India.
 Its beak pointing towards Tibet,
 To receive dharma teaching from Tibet;
 Its back pointing up towards the Sky,
 Welcoming bountiful precipitation from the Sky,
 Its claws pointing towards the earth.
 By collecting harvest from the soils,
 [I] shall make offerings to the precious Buddha above,
 Distribute alms to the beggars and
 To relish a sumptuous party in pleasant mood.

1.2.2.6. Sentimental

The Sun that dwells in the Sky,
 Sad behind the mountains before rising,
 Unhappy in the middle of the Sky after rising,
 Sad in the eternal the journey round the universe.

Similarly;

The river that descends towards the plains;
 Depressed underneath the earth before appearing;
 Cheerless while in the centre of the stream;
 Miserable always while touring the Indian plains;

Likewise;

The Snow Lion of the mountain tops;
 Saddens the heart of mountains if unexplored;
 The mountain peaks and foothills are sad when exploring
 the inner ranges;
 Always saddened going round Mt Kailash;

Like the examples above;

The many-striped Indian Tiger of the dense forest;
 Depressed in the comforts of the lair before wandering
 out;
 Gloomy in the jungle and meadows once wandering;
 Always upset roaming cypress forest;

Similar to that;

The life of *tsho ma garpa* (attendant);
 Has been gloomy while in the womb;
 Remained dismal in the mother's lap after birth,
 Always staying hopelessly staying in the great fortress.





1.2.2.7. Debating

Question:

My father is likened to a great mountain;
Can you embrace the great mountain?
My mother is likened to the great river;
Do you measure the river?
My uncle is likened to the white stupa;
Can you whiten the white stupa?
My friends count as the flowers in the meadows;
Can you collect all the flowers?
Offer them at the colourful shrine.
And, chime the melodious Dharma bell?

Answer:

So your father resembles the great mountain;
I transform myself into a pair of vultures;
And hold the great mountain in my arms;
Is your mother like the flowing river?
I transform myself into a pair of otters;
And measure the length of the river;
Is your uncle likened to the white stupa?
I manifest myself into pair of pigeons;
And I will repaint the stupa white;
Are your friends as many as flowers of the open field?
On the eight, thirtieth and fifteenth day;
From the pleasurable meadows;
Gathering the beautiful flowers;
Shall offer them at the adorable shrine;
If [I] chime your Dharma bell by its loop;
What words would you have for that?

1.2.2.8. Supplication

The cuckoo of the forest of lofty mountains;
I come from the wild jungles;
Roaming in the rich fields of the valley;
Having become addicted to the white rice *sham bja*;
[I] forgot to return to my woody abode on high;
Thanks to the king of birds;
I must return before I forget;
You the white rice *sham bja kar chu*, my feast;
Please remain undestroyed by hailstorms;
If I, the Cuckoo am fortunate to live long;
An aspiration to enjoy your taste again and again;
Here at this rich field, I will make.

In the same manner;

I, the gentle *garpa* of the village;
Hailing from the auspicious village;
I wander along the big towns;
Having fallen in love with the charming girl;

I forgot to turn back to my village;
Due to the tall order of my parents;
I must return before I forget;
You, the lady with clear vision;
If I, the gentle *garpa* live long;
An aspiration to reunite at the send;
[I] shall make to the magnificent mason;
Homage and the most gracious;
Lama, the body emanation of the Buddha;
The coming year will as happy as this year;
In the happy times of the coming years;
[I] make this wish to see you time and again.

1.2.2.9. Narratives

A historical ballad is an account of one's experiences told in the form of prose or verses. Lozey on Gelong Zhonpai Dawa, Gelong Sumdar Trashi, Pemi Tshewang Tashi, Tshewang Peldron (the maid servant) are good examples of the stories of their life and deeds passed down orally in the form of ballads. Furthermore, the secret practitioners of Tantra teachings have also used lozey in order to disseminate their methods of practice, experiences and important topics. An example of a pilgrim retelling his pilgrimage to sacred sites is given below.

The realised astrologer of Tibet;
Recollected the Dharma whilst still in the mother's womb;
Learnt the alphabets at the age of five;
Sat in retreat at the age of six and seven;
Went on pilgrimage at eighteen years;
Visited the thirteen districts of Tibet;
Had seen the towering pinnacle of (Maitreya) Buddha of Lhasa;
Also saw the self-risen Kharsapani (image of Avalokiteshvara);
Saw the eminent eight lineage holders of India;
Carrying a *kelzang khur shing* (rucksack) on the back;
Wearing a *gomde pezha* (meditation hat) on his head;
Holding a stick of renunciation with three joints;
Visited Pelphu temple of Paro Taktshang;
Visited Kyerchu temple of Paro;
Journeying along the path to Darchagang (in Punakha);
Saw the sacred site of the deity Chakrasamvara;
Underneath the jabzhi roof of Punakha Dzong;
Received audience from the *Khenchen* (chief abbot) of monastic body;
Saw the sixteen sublime Arhats;
Saw the golden and silver statues of Punakha;
Saw the self-rising Kharsapani;
The most stunning deity is the deity of Nyizer temple;

The biggest statue is the image at Bajo temple;
 The most blessing deity is the deity at Chime Temple;
 Indeed, I have visited all these but;
 Missed out the Stupa of Great Purity from India;
 When I went to see the Indian Stupa of Great Purity;
 Locked with a padlock engraved with a tiger;
 A flexible metal latch of serpent's head fitted from inside;
 Thus, failed to see the Stupa of Great Purity;
 Then, the realised Tsipa of Tibet;
 Made offerings to the Triple Gem dwelling above;
 Gave away alms to the beggars;
 Made propitiations to *Ogyen Padma* (Guru Padmasambhava);
 The outer lock engraved with a tiger disappeared;
 The flexible metal latch of serpent broke from inside;
 The base was surrounded by eight mighty rivers;
 The base that is encircled by eight mighty rivers;
 Whether it is seen by Mermaids;
 Or by the golden fish making circumambulation;
 Everyone else is forbidden to see;
 Yet, I have seen it now;
 Its waist is held by a vajra cliff;
 The reason it is embraced by the vajra cliff is;
 Whether it is seen by the cliff's deity or not
 Whether it is encircled by buzzing bees or not;
 It is forbidden for everyone else;
 I, the realised Tsipa have seen it.
 The tip is embraced by the sun and rainbows;
 The reason it is embraced by the sun and rainbows is;
 Whether the tip is seen by the sun or not;
 Or circumambulations by the moon;
 Everyone else is forbidden to see it;
 Yet, I have now seen that.
 One, I, realised Tsipa of Tibet;
 Two, the parents who gave birth to me;
 Three, the teachers who taught me letters when young;
 An aspiration prayer to attain enlightenment together;
 [I] make here while making circumambulations of the stupa;
 May the father Guru grant his blessings?

1.2.2.10. Advice: Lozey as a Precept

Lozey associated with religious and laity activities;

Astrological guidance in constructing a house:

Seek the right spot on the day of the Mouse;
 Install the foundation rock on the Ox day;
 Erect the entrance door on the day of Tiger;
 Put the staircase on the Dragon day;
 Mount the rain gutter on the day of Snake;
 Place house roof on the day of Bird;

Superstitions and beliefs:

A crow is crowing indicating the coming of guests;
 Prosperous guest arrives at the door;
 The flame of fire in oven is speaking;
 The guest may appear then there is meat;
 The mewing cat is wiping its face;
 There may come an excellent and pious visitor.

Advice:

Don't make a warm fire out of straw;
 If you ever make a fire out of straw;
 Instead of being gratified by warmth provided;
 You cannot later bear the suffering from cold;
 Don't drink the cold water of the mountains;
 If you ever drink the cold water of the mountains;
 Instead of appreciating its cool effect;
 You cannot later bear the distress of thirst;
 Do not seek a lover from distant place;
 If you ever seek a lover from distant place;
 Instead of cherishing the present happiness;
 You cannot withstand the test of despair in the end.

1.2.3. Ode

An oral game, *tsangmo* or *tsam-mo* is short and melodious poetry normally sung for entertainment by people of all ages in all the regions. It is also considered as one of the ornaments of speech. There are several very similar names for the game, with each having its own meaning and definition, according to the elderly village people; *tsam* is a short poem either composed on the spot or learnt from elders or friends, which is recited to a melodious tune. *Mo* means divination or test. Therefore, it is a song sung to test the feelings of another person. In another version, it is also a song sung by individuals in a group, to make the same divination of feelings as above by a stick (*tsang*) pointing to the personal items already collected from each of the participants, guided by the rhythms of the song. Another very similar name to that for the stick *tsangmo* indicates that this tradition may have been derived from U-tsang province of Tibet. However, some elderly villagers interviewed about the game thought that the terminology had nothing to do with U-tsang at all. Taking their local knowledge into account, it seems likely that the slight difference in nomenclature might just reflect a local dilution of the term which has crept in over time. Although there are different names given according to how the game is played, Bhutanese commonly refer to it as *tsangmo*. Performance of the game is indigenous and unique to Bhutan, with the



poetic songs passed down from our forefathers through the ages and often sung in the respective dialects of the singers' districts. While singing tsangmo, the lyrics are actually based on the moods and situation.

For stick tsangmo the rules are as follows: each male and female participant should place an item in the centre. A neutral person is assigned who either closes his eyes or sits facing away from the rest so that he does not know the owner of individual items. When one has finished his/her turn then the assigned neutral person will hold a stick and repeat the song once again. According to the beat of the song, he points at each item. Wherever the point of the stick remains when the song finishes, he makes a comment according to the meaning of the song, "whoever is the owner of the item is, the song's message is (for example) Love. You are being loved by the singer, are you in love with him/her? If yes, you should tell him/her at the earliest possible."

The message is clearly conveyed through the use of metaphors in the form of a four-line verse with two couplets. Each couplet is self-contained. The first usually makes a statement or describes a situation. The second one makes a response.

Then the owner is identified. Sometimes the owner may be the same sex as the singer in which case the group expresses its sympathy in chorus and ends in laughter. "In the old days people were also married through this divination game" explained a few elderly citizens. Apart from these rules, one does not have to stick to one form

of expression. Participants can change the context of the lyrics as they desire. Since tsangmo is meant for fun, no individual is expected to get emotional at the message as the singer is also blind folded. Moreover, no one in the group clearly knows on whose item the stick will land at the end.

General tsangmo (i.e. not with the stick) is usually sung casually in a group, for example during celebrations, while on a walk, during the transplantation of paddy, weeding, collecting firewood, transporting manure in the fields, harvesting paddy, plantation of maize, harvesting maize and in a leisure period. This is an impromptu entertainment where you hone your skill in creating verses on the spot and also where you learn from and communicate with others. One person sings and another responds, the debate continuing until a winner or a draw is declared. This version of the oral game is played in an unstructured way so there are no particular rules. Today, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service arranges phone-in tsangmo sessions (akin to talk-back radio) among listeners from different places and the participants either choose to reply to the previous singer or sing their own part without aiming at anyone in particular.

Regarding the tune of tsangmo, there are more than four types depending on custom, language and dialect. According to the knowledgeable citizens, while singing tsangmo, the first participant must sing a stanza in praise of the Triple Gem or a divine being, as a way of making an offering. The subsequent participants may dwell on friendship, love, odium, discord, joy, sorrow

as they like, and end with verses of supplication or good wishes. A few examples of tsangmo are given below.

1.2.3.1. Praising

In the east appears a twinkling star;
In the west emerge two twinkling stars;
Twinkling of stars one after another;
Finally, they all merge with the brilliance of the sky;

1.2.3.2. Romantic

In the vast, serene meadow;
Filled with grazing *dzo* and *dzomo* (hybrid male and female yak);
In the eyes of a calf;
There is only one charming dzomo;

1.2.3.3. Odium

Coming from the country of China;
The sword the length of 18 handspans
One person was killed in the previous year;
The evil is rising again;

1.2.3.4. Discord

Discovered from the depth of the Ocean;
The right spiralled conch;
Even though you are bright;
I will have no need of you;

1.2.3.5. Joyful or Rejoicing

Radiance and rainbow filled the sky;
Flowers and grains abound the land;
By the warmth of one's love;
We rejoice in the prosperity and pleasure;

1.2.3.6. Sorrowful

Amongst the most sorrowful of the woods;
The dejected door step of the ground floor is worse;
Amongst the many desperate human beings;
I, the feeble one, am the worse;

1.2.3.7. Supplication

Brought together by the previous karma;
Two of us, the couple;
Like the sun and sky above;
[I] pray for our unshakable existence;
The tsang mo described above were taken from those

prevailing in the western regions of the country. The one below is from Lhuentse district of eastern Bhutan.

1.2.3.8. Tsangmo of Kurtoc (Kurtoc speakers)

As the river flows downstream;
It is the foam that returns;
If it is to return, let it the river;
I don't want the foam to return;

1.2.4. Narration

Darshey is a traditional practice where a man holding a *khadar* (auspicious white scarf) in his outstretched hands faces the seated crowd, and makes auspicious speeches at a ceremonial function, usually during religious and social occasions. (The origin of the tradition is attributed to Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal when he introduced this practice during the consecration ceremony of Punakha Dzong in 1639.) The tradition, however, may vary slightly from village to village in the use of language and presentation such as making speeches decked with maxims or simply narratives. The worldly tradition of *darshey* does not require to be sung like *gurma*, *Lu* or *tsammo* but is expressed more or less like a recitation. That is why a person may begin *darshey* with the phrase such as '*wo la so la ...*' and end his speech by offering words of good wishes and aspirations such as '*... let us pray that we see each other's countenance again and again in future.*'

Depending upon the talents and level of education, the performer applies poetic elegance in the speech; *darshey* is usually performed during auspicious occasions. *Atsara* (masked clown) also makes similar speeches during *tshechus*. Therefore, this section provides a sample of *darshey* performed during auspicious ceremonies and *darshey* performed by *atsaras* during festivals.

Bhutan has a unique tradition of stressing on *tendrel* (the independent arising of auspicious events). Any occasion or event has to begin and end on a positive and hopeful note. Whether it is house construction, marriage, promotion, or an important project, a ceremonial inauguration in the beginning and a well-wishing conclusion are very important social values. Thus, *darshey* is an important item in any ceremonial programme. *Darshey* means narration of scarf, especially presented by an eloquent person to the guest of honour adding some melody in order to enhance the auspiciousness of the ceremony. It is an indigenous oral expression practiced all over Bhutan. Depending on the

languages, dialects and cultures, darshey is also called *Legshey* (elegant saying/narration of auspiciousness), *Khashey* (art of speech) and sometimes *Nangwa drub* (verbal approval). Unlike Gurma, Lu and Tsammo, Darshey has no complex melody, rather, it all depends on the tone and rhythm of the recitation.

Regarding the lyrics, the reciter uses appropriate words to meet the occasion, mostly decorating these with similes and other literary flourishes. There are no specific lyrics for darshey, and the elegance of the recitation depends on the literary and musical talents of the reciter. Moreover, there is great cultural diversity in darshey, as the length, flow and rhythm of individual darshey vary from village to village and dialect to dialect. However, darshey normally starts right after the ceremonial ritual. When it is time to offer khadar to the guest of honour, presiding guest, or whoever else is being honoured, an eloquent speaker holds a silken scarf and begins the darshey by saying “*wo la so la*” and concludes with well-wishing prayers and aspirations to the guest of honour and everyone gathered.

Sadly, darshey is slowly disappearing from our cultural landscape these days.

Amongst many different types of darshey, *tendrel dzegoi darshey* (narration of ceremonial functions) and *atsarai darshey* (narration made by *Atsara* (clown) during the performances of mask dance at festival) can cover all. The following are representative examples of *tendrel zego* darshey, *gatoen tshechui darshey* (similar to ceremonial narration) and *atsarai darshey* provided by some local experts in these matters.

1.2.4.1. Recitation for Ceremonial Functions/ Auspicious Occasions

Wo la so la! Today, in this perfect, prosperous and
wholesome place,
Beneath the sky roof with no pillars to support it;
On the floor with no supporting walls;
Lion is the King of the carnivores;
If one leaps everyone follows;
Garuda is the King of birds;
If one flies everyone does likewise;
One who talks well is the King of maxims;
When the wise one narrates everyone knows.

Likewise, I appeal to the distinguished gathering here,
kindly lend me your ears just like a deer listens to a sound.

Wo la so la! Today in this mansion of complete victory

(over evils), presided over by (*the most gracious/
benevolent root guru or whichever personality
is presiding as appropriate*) wise people seated
in prominent places while the others adorn the
remaining places in neatly arranged rows. All the
dharma practitioners, dharma colleagues, families and
relatives and all the fortunate ladies and gentlemen
seated here, kindly lend your ears to my submission
of the narration which has fewer words but generous
meaning. As the saviour of the sentient beings Tsangpa
Gyare had once said:

Prepare for a good omen and embrace auspicious
occasions;
One may perfect the occasion (with details);

Likewise,

Today, the stars in the sky are auspicious;
The Sun rising in the east brings warmth;
The brilliant stars shining in middle is auspicious;
Yesterday, the day was prosperity;
Today is the day of fulfilment.

Therefore, on this day of the convergence of
prosperity, fulfilment and good omens; according to
the saying “*a new born child should be given a name*”
and “*a good speech should follow the drinking of wine.*”
Today, to the patron and the entire local population,
all sound in physical health and mind, all thriving
with ample wealth and livestock in this place where
peace and happiness flourish, to all congregated here
in this place (where the teachings of profound sutra
and the commentaries, empowerment and festivals,
or consecration ceremony of house, temples and
chotens, auspicious celebrating, the birth of a child or
a wedding celebrations, and so on), may I be allowed
to submit a few words of good omen.

(Depending on the nature of the occasion, anyone can
add auspicious words in this) and conclude with well-
wishing prayers and aspirations like this:

‘By the merits accumulated from my narration of
auspiciousness, may the teachings of Buddha flourish,
lengthening the life of those persons who support
the teachings; particularly let the life of those who
practice the dharma and meditation live longer than
the flow of water in the mighty rivers; and let this
world be free of diseases and famine, let wars and
battles cease, let there be timely rain and let the crops
and livestock flourish. Particularly in this land of
sandalwood, let there be no mention of bad harvest

and war, hailstorms and famine at all, and let all the birds open their beaks and fill the atmosphere with the songs of good year and good omen and their blessings. Let all misfortunes be dissolved and every being attain the life of Buddhahood. Among all those who are gathered here, let the old live longer without any obstructions in their lives, let the younger ones be blessed with long and meritorious lives, let their fortune grow, their healthy bodies and prosperity come together and without hindrance rejoice in the melody of happiness and dance in peace. This is the aspiration of auspiciousness.

Also, to the generous proprietor and patron who has provided ample food and drinks in the prosperous house, in this indestructible mandala which is blessed by an unceasing flow of nectar from above which is collected in an ocean like a crystal mirror below. In between, the brightness of the mandala produces a colour so gorgeous that one can hardly restrain oneself from gazing at its brilliance. Here, without any harm and mishaps to the people, wealth and livestock, let there be growth and advancement unobstructed for 108 long years from the seeds of all the virtues.

May all refrain from negative deeds, harming not even the tiniest of insects and their eggs or hatchlings, and always lay a foundation for happiness, create a home of tranquillity and experience happiness and the growth of prosperity. Furthermore, with no bodily illness, no distress to the mind but by singing the songs of happiness and dancing in a state of well-being, let such occasions for celebrations occur again and again until the end of time. Let us all aspire that all of us meet in the same cheerful mood in future. *Trashi delek* (May good prevail).

1.2.4.2. Ceremonial Recitation (another version)

Wo la so la! In this prosperous and splendid year
perfected by the stars and planets,
In this moment, enriched by music and prosperity;
During the waxing period of good fortune;
In the sky, shine the auspicious stars;
On the land, all enjoy prosperity;
In the middle, the Sun is so warm;
At this moment of threefold auspiciousness;

As in the words of the protector of sentient beings, the
noble Tsangpa Gyare;
Prepare for a good omen and embrace auspicious
occasions;
One may perfect the occasion to profusion.

Likewise, if I were to deliberate extensively on the preparation for a good omen to embrace auspicious occasions, it would be impossible to conclude the flight of a vulture even in eighteen days. So if I may present a summary, “an auspiciousness omen of perfection” means; the reckoning of Sky with congregation of wonderful Sun, Moon and Stars; the earth, together with the brilliant *Sa ri* (one of the 21 constellations) and the centre, the warmth of the Sun highlighted by the Sun, Moon and Stars. And “Initiating activities for abundance” means; inviting the gods and superior beings from the expanse of reality above; arranging in perfect seating and making the offering of perfect wealth by the prosperous and devout patron; *(details can be inserted according to occasions such as promotion, marriage, birthday/birth anniversary, consecration of newly built house etc. by mentioning the name of the patron).* *For example, in an offering of khadar on promotion:* “by showing the heroic talent and by benevolence of the superior, today having received the promotion of power and influence leading to this grand ceremony, I would, therefore, like to offer this *leg she* describing the auspicious white scarf to you:

This white silken cloth is the scarf of good luck;
The tip of the scarf from Ogyen’s Tibet;
Received from the hand of the emanated King of Tibet;
It contains the blessings of precious Dharma;
The end of the scarf came from the south of China;
Received from the hand of the Chinese maiden;
It holds the divine blessings of wealth and food;
The middle part of the scarf is from Bhutan;
Received from the hands of Ngawang Namgyal;
It contains the boon of more children and riches.

For promotion: *(insert name)* I am offering this auspicious silken scarf to you today along with these hopes and wishes. As the saying goes, “Identity of a hero, name for a popular person and strength to the powerful horse.” Likewise, confided in by the superior leaders and trusted by the people, drawn from amongst many and elevated from amidst a few, you have been promoted to this rank with power and appropriate resources. You have a great responsibility to perform your duties fairly and equally, and without fear or favour, with dedication, commitment and loyalty, to accomplish all activities to help the general public. May you achieve all your goals without any obstructions. May you also progress just as the waxing Moon. With these prayers, I offer this auspicious scarf to you. *Trashi delek*.

For marriage: Today *(insert name)* the two of you, are fortunate human beings, having been born to virtuous

and wealthy parents. As a result of aspiration prayers in the past life and the height of present deeds, although you were born in different places and grew up in separate locations, you are now brought together by the karmic connections. Hereafter, by being a lovely couple, may you live without ups and downs in your life but be successful and live long without obstacles; with boys holding the right hands and girls holding the left, enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity; with the pleasant sound of ha ha and hi hi. To wish you these I offer to you the auspicious white khadar. Trashi delek.

Offering khadar to a new born:

Yaa! Having opened the door and come out into this lovely world you will grow up with sound health and mind. My prayers are that you will help spread the teachings of the Buddha, make contributions to the growth of prosperity in the country, work for the good of all the people and sentient beings and finally help lengthen the noble lineage of your parents in this world. With these earnest wishes, I offer you this white khadar with my prayers deep from the heart. Trashi delek.

Offering khadar to the Zo-wo (the chief Carpenter):

Today we celebrate the consecration of the magnificent house *Trashi Gomang* (magnificent home with numerous doors) well-constructed by the emanation of the divine artist Balep (Bishwakarma). As the saying goes, “We owe equal gratitude to the person in leadership, the benevolent parents, teacher who teaches us the letters and the carpenter who builds” and we must never fail to recognise them by their faces if we meet them by day, and by their voices if we encounter them at night. This is how we remember our gratitude. A joke is also added to entertain others.

That the white flag stands on the roof;
I owe it to my carpenter.
That I don't have to pay him wages,
I owe it to my wife.
Trashi delek!

1.2.4.3. Recitation of Atsara (clown)

Generally, ordinary people perceive Atsara as a comedian that appears during tshechus in the midst of mask dancers wearing a funny mask, usually holding a phallus and a rattle in his hands to entertain the audience. However, the word came from the Sanskrit term *achārya*; a title attached to a great spiritual teacher, who can claim his place among the 84 Mahasiddhas, representing all those who have within one lifetime attained direct realisation of the Buddha's teachings. Their appearance



as clowns represents our ignorance through which we fail to see the ultimate truth. That is why our forefathers had regarded the senior atsaras as the embodiment of guardian deities and sublime beings.

During such gatherings as tshechu all the dignitaries such as spiritual masters and monks, ministers, secretaries, merchants and the laities give them money as a mark of their appreciation. In return, the atsara also gives auspicious narration in the form of concluding words, which is a unique aspect of Bhutanese culture. Unfortunately, this good aspect of the atsara's auspicious narration is now on the verge of disappearing.

Greetings:

Traditionally, formal greetings were initiated and exchanged only between people of equal status. Superiors would normally inquire about health and other family conditions and the subordinates answered as much as was necessary. The modern day verbal greetings with kuzu-zangpo emerged as a result of interaction with western society when there was a need for the equivalent of good morning, hello and so on. Being a clown, Atsara makes no distinction between high officials and simple citizens. All are equal during the tshechu and it is the time and the place where he can abandon the social proprieties. Therefore, he humorously bows down uttering *Ya la!* to those who give money to him and to those whom he approaches. Atsaras spontaneously greet one and all in the same

manner, as they symbolize ascetic beings and thus do not have to observe the normal greeting protocols. Today the habit is to add *Rinpoche* (Precious One) or some flowery words to the title to flatter the person being addressed.

When greeting an official:

Ya la! (Here they address the person by their appropriate title.) Today, having found your way to this special occasion of tshechu festival, it is fortunate for me to be able to meet Honourable Dragsho with your face as bright as the full Moon. Yet again, like today, I pray that I meet you in the coming year not here in this open ground but, up there in the pavilion wearing a red scarf and a sword as white as the water fall by your side on the same occasion.

When greeting a benefactor:

Ya la! Most prosperous Jinda! Very successful and prospering business today, and from now onwards also this is an auspicious time to pray in multiple of hundreds that you and your children and your grandchildren will continue to receive wealth in abundance like the Monsoon rains.

Concluding words:

This year, we gathered here to celebrate this grand festival, to commemorate the birth of Guru Padmasambhava, the Second Buddha, in a lotus flower at the Lake Dhanakosha on the Tenth Day of the Month. Having suffered no ailments in body and distresses in mind we have been able to come together again. Likewise, we make the wish to be able to congregate next year and the year after next, just as we did the year before. Without the disappearance of either the elderly from ageing, nor the children from our laps, and with the glory of our ancestry higher than the sky and the family lineage longer than the river; this is our prayer. With this prayer, I have received rewards of cash in hundreds from *Dragsho*, *Lamas*, *Tshongpon* and *Jinda* (*whichever it is*) out of great affection and appreciation.

Thus, the *atsara* expresses his gratitude. According to elderly people, the prayers and wishes made by an *Atsara* can come true in our lifetime. *Laepe go!* (Well done!)

1.2.4.4. Narration About an Arrow

There are quite a number of *boedra* (Bhutanese folk songs) dedicated to an arrow which can be danced in a group. But, this description of an arrow is similar to *lozey* in terms of creation, usage of different speeches and length but popularly, any descriptions as mentioned

are called *kha shey* and these can be sung very loudly and confidently by a single person. When the turn comes to an archer, he shouts out with encouraging words towards his cheering team before he shoots the arrow. The song must be sung with a strong and penetrating voice so that it can be heard by both onlookers and opponents. The song is an encouragement for his team mates cheering him from the other target. The content of the song is basically a description of an arrow and the archer himself.

On the other side of the Mo li la (name of a mountain pass);

Did you hear that *Deo ja la yang ka* (a kind of reed) is growing;

This man who is youthful in age;

Cut a pair of *Deu ja la yang ka*;

Feathers adorn the head of the arrow;

Its endpoint decked with metal;

The middle part, enfolded in silken scarf;

In the middle of a golden coloured meadow;

This will not harm the happy arrow;

In need it will destroy the points of opponents;

I release it to hit the target for the point;

I shall shake the white target;

Gentlemen, good friends in my team;

I release my team to let you dance cheerfully.

Alright alright! I am still here, my friends.

1.2.4.5. Narration on Paper Making and Calligraphy

This *khashey* is extracted from *Aule* (auspiciousness narration of Laya, Gasa district.)

The Drukpa Nagwang Namgyal of the south;

Born in the country of Tibet;

The good-hearted Tibetans sent him to the south;

Served faithfully by the southern people;

Having arrived in this southern land;

He imposed wood tax on all the men;

And Daphne plant tax on the women;

Despite exploring the hills and valleys;

[They] could not find Daphne plants;

But Madam *Hendar* the deity of the cliff

Helped find the Daphne plants;

Cooked them by water and fire;

Crushed them with the giant mortar and pestle;

Imposed tax on the dyers for the flowers

Used to brighten the colour;

Adding brightening hue [to the paper];

Au le sa, au le, au le;

The script started with *ja gar ke du* (language of India, i.e. Sanskrit);

And ending with *zo paisangay* (complete enlightenment);
The art of making beautiful letters;
Wonder how these are written;
Au le sa, au le, au le.

From our forefathers we have inherited countless such oral descriptions touching on different aspects of life

and different situations, composed with intelligence and wit, which were passed on down to the future generations through oral transmission by many people over the years. It is hoped that these few khashey translated above will provide the nucleus for future researchers wishing to make an in depth study of this topic.

1.3. ORAL TRADITIONS WITHOUT MELODIES



1.3.1. Stories

The literal meaning of the word *sung* is to protect or to guard or narrate something. In this context, *sung* means narration of an account from the past, proverbs, and such stories that are accompanied by examples from relevant situations expressed in varying moods. Narrated without specific length, such accounts are considered appropriate mode of informing others aimed at educating children. Some of these narrations have been passed down orally while others are found in written forms. Both constitute the concept of stories. Stories that fall in this genre are folktale, legend, and historical accounts. Persons who tell stories are known as *sung tangmi* (story teller) or *drung tangmi* or *drung khen* (narrator of legends). It is beyond the scope of this study to state how oral traditions have originated and developed.

In the context of Bhutan such stories are generally classified into three groups. These are: *Choe drel gi sung* (religious stories), which are factual accounts of events

that took place concerning spiritual persons and their activities, such as: *tog joed* (account), *kerab* or *namthar* (biography, autobiography) of a historical figure, an enlightened master, a dharma king or queen, or a minister, providing an account of the legends and myths concerning their deeds, preserved in written form by their disciples, attendants or their followers. There are also *jigten ngoe jung gi sung* or true stories of ordinary life. People with literary talent often composed ghost stories, romances and fairy tales, with fictional people, animals, birds and so forth as the central characters with the intention of providing moral lessons for the reader, or listener when the account is narrated orally.

These three types of stories are briefly described below:

a) Choe drel gi sung: This includes *namthar* (biography/ autobiography), *namthar cha drawa* (an account similar to biography), *ke rab tog joed* (biographical accounts of famous persons) and other dharma-related stories like legends and myths.

b) Jigten ngoe jung gi sung: This includes - *gyal sid lojue* (history of monarchy), *mi de lojue* (accounts of daily life), *dzong gi chagrab* (history of fortresses), *mag drung* (accounts of war and conflict), *pawoi sung* (accounts of heroism), *dre due ki sung* (narratives related to demons, ghosts and spirits), *sa ne lojue* (accounts of places), *lung chog lojue* (accounts of regions), *yue goi lojue* (accounts of villages), *khar gi lojue* (history of castles), *nag tshang gi lojue* (accounts about the nobility), and still others; *choe drel ze go* (accounts of religious ceremonies), *gyal sid ze go* (accounts related to a king's deeds), *ne kor lojue* (accounts of pilgrimages), *Tse dran lojue* (accounts of sporting events), *tshong dral lojue* (accounts of trading activities) and *tsoe sher lojue* (accounts of disputes) amongst others. These are all nonfictional accounts of events, people and places.

c) Jig ten choe sung: This group includes *aloi sung* (child lore/fairy tales), *goe droi sung* (jokes/humorous stories), *jig nang gi sung* (horror stories), *thruel nang gi sung* (sorrowful/sad stories), *gu kor gi sung* (witty/deceptive stories), *tse dung gi sung* (romantic/love stories), *sem chen gi sung* (parables and fables) and other fictitious stories.

According to the elderly people in the villages, although there are many types of stories they generally fall into one of three categories: *ngoe sung* (true stories), *dre sung* (ghost stories) and *ro sung* (stories related to death). As this category seems narrow and overlaps with others, it is mentioned here for information of the readers. In olden days, stories were told by parents, teachers, elders and friends to groups, to one another or to children, especially during leisure time and while in bed. Stories are told to ease weariness and to create fun, as well as for the conveying of moral and ethical lessons.

They cover a number of themes conveying various ideas and exchange of knowledge amongst families, friends and neighbours. In Bhutan, irrespective of the language in which it is told, a story usually begins with “*dang phu ding phu* (long time ago) and follows with appropriate gestures depending on the mood of the story. While narrating any type of story, though there is no written document of rules to abide by both narrator and listener yet, there are oral accounts and belief deep embedded to all the Bhutanese irrespective of different regions. The rules are very simple: when the narrator starts a story he/she should not leave it unfinished, and the listeners have to be attentive and respond to every single sentence, uttering ‘*Ong! Ong!*’ If the rules are not followed, and the narrator stops before coming to the end of his tale, it is believed that evil spirits or ghosts who are also

listening to the story, will make their own ending for it, or, if listeners are inattentive, these invisible spirits will respond instead, later causing sickness or even death.

There is a tragic story narrated by knowledgeable persons on disregard of rules to be observed while telling a story. The story goes as follows: Once upon a time two brothers lived with their cattle in a dense forest. In the day, while looking after their cattle they used to play various games to pass the time, and in the evening, they brought all their cattle back to the shed. While the older brother tied up the cattle and made them secure and safe from predators, the younger brother would prepare dinner on an earthen hearth for both of them. After satisfying their hunger, they would settle down for sleep near the oven to absorb the heat from it. Before going to sleep, the older brother would tell a story every night. Sometimes the theme of the story would be very enjoyable and at times sentimental. Occasionally, the story would be romantic or else a horror tale. On one night, unlike other days, the older brother narrated a rather boring story and the brother made an attentive response till the second half of the tale. Unaware that the younger brother had dropped off to sleep, the older brother continued the story. Later he heard an unusual voice making the response from the dark near their feet. Doubtfully, he asked his brother “Is that you brother?” When there was no reply, he realised his brother was already in a deep sleep. “Who is that?” shouted the older brother who quickly lit a lamp and then saw a horrifying figure he had never set eyes on before in his life. The evil spirit had caused no harm to him yet, but it had frightened him and he gradually began to fall ill after that. Rituals and divination gave no benefit, and gradually he weakened and finally died. However, the moral of the story is that both the story teller and the listener must be attentive and responsive to any type of story that is being narrated.

A few examples are given below.

1.3.1.1. A Religious Story

Choeden gi Gyalpo (Dharma King)

Long, long ago, in this world, there lived an incomparable Dharma King, who was an embodiment of Bodhisattvas. He was not only respected by his countrymen but also by the kings of other countries. Although the King ruled the country in accordance with the laws of the Dharma, due to the bad karma of the people and other beings, the country was experiencing a terrible draught. The King then gathered together all his knowledgeable and

resourceful ministers, and elderly Brahmins and sought their suggestions on how to make it possible for the rain to come in order to help the growth of the crops. The ministers and the Brahmins suggested offering libations to invoke the guardian deities according to non-Buddhist practices. The King knew that the non-Buddhist practices involved animal sacrifice, but he acknowledged their advice. Secretly, though, the King had a different plan.

With the intention of steering his subjects onto the path of virtue, he shared his plan with the ministers and intellectuals. "I have decided to make one thousand human sacrifices. Therefore, you must make preparations for the ritual" commanded the King, his command seeming heavier than a mountain falling upon them.

The nervous ministers pleaded with the King, saying that the citizens would feel uneasy at such activity, but, the King replied, "You do not need to worry about this. I can assure you that the people will not feel perturbed." Then the King gathered his subjects and made this announcement: "In order to bring peace in the country, I have decided to make an offering of one thousand human sacrifices. Those of you who violate the laws and cause harm to the community will be sacrificed. For this, you are closely watched by my secret agents. Therefore, all of you have to be aware of the consequences of what you do."

Believing in the seriousness of the Royal Command, the ministers spread fear by sending officials to arrest the violators of the laws. But, not a single violator was found. Having succeeded in making his subjects abide by the ten virtues and follow the path of Buddha dharma, the King was very happy. The King then opened his treasury and distributed alms lavishly to everyone's satisfaction. In this way the King ruled the country in accordance with the Buddha's precepts. The kingdom was then blessed with timely rain and a bountiful harvest that reduced the sufferings of the people and brought economic progress. Due to the wise rule of the Bodhisattva King and the collective prosperity of all the officials and subjects, everyone lived in complete happiness and peace.

1.3.1.2. A Humorous Story

Ap Wang Drugye

Long ago, there lived a man named Ap Wang Drugye in the district of Wang (present day Thimphu) who was famous for his wit and craftiness. One day, four thieves

set out to steal cattle. On the way they came upon Ap Wang Drugye and asked him, "Oi! Ap Wang Drugye, where are you going?"

Ap Wang Drugye replied, "Can't you see? I am coming from where my back is and I am going towards where I am facing. But the four of you look like you are going to steal cattle. Where are you going?" The foursome thought that since he already knew they were going to steal cattle, they might as well ask him teach them a better idea. They said, "Ap Wang Drugye, please take a little rest, we have something to discuss." Then they said, "Since you already know what we are going to do, please teach us where to go and how should we go about it."

Ap Wang Drugye replied, "I have already thought that four of you could not have done anything better than this. I think what you are going to do is very easy. How can this be done? Look across to the other side. There is a man ploughing with a pair of oxen. Consider those oxen as yours and you may take them away right now." The four thieves said, "How can this be possible? Firstly it is broad daylight and secondly there is a man guiding the oxen to plough the field. This is going to be difficult." Then, Ap Wang Drugye retorted, "In that case you might as well forget it. I said it is easy and you said it is difficult. So I am going." As he was moving away, the foursome asked, "then, how should we go about this?" He replied, "Later when the ploughman goes to take his meal, he will leave the oxen to graze on the edge of the field. Then two of you will lead away the oxen while the other two will sweep the track to conceal the footprints. That is how you will fulfil your intentions."

Then the thieves waited until the ploughman left the field to take his lunch. Right away they rushed towards the oxen. Two of them led away an ox each while the other two followed, sweeping clean the footmarks left behind and covering a long distance.

Later in the evening, they killed the poor oxen. Having completed the task, they went to Ap Wang Drugye and said, "Today, because of your idea, we got what we wanted without much trouble. As a gesture of our gratitude, please take as much as you want of the meat and the remainder will be equally divided among us." Ap Wang Drugye replied "You want to look like good hearted men, after all. But I did not help you because I needed the meat. I have no one to feed and I cannot carry the meat. If you insist then, give me the bladder and a knuckle.

Then the four thieves whispered among themselves

saying, "Other times Ap Wang Drugye is said to be very crafty but today he appears to be a good hearted man." So they gave him the bladder and a knuckle. Then Ap Wang Drugye told them, "Now the four of you do not need to fear or be in a hurry. It will be better if you take your time and let the meat dry up a bit before you carry it away." Then he left them.

But, Ap Wang Drugye stayed at a hearing distance from them and inflated the bladder. The four thieves were cooking the meat, which let out a delicious smell right up to his nose. As they were ready to enjoy the feast, Ap Wang Drugye beat the knuckle on the inflated bladder that gave out a *bang* sound. Upon hearing the banging, the foursome looked at each other in shock. Then Ap Wang Drugye once again beat the bladder and then cried out loudly, "Please it is not I. It is the four of them. They are down there drying the meat. Please forgive me." Then the four thieves said, "Now this Ap Wang Drugye has messed everything up. If people come here there will be big trouble. We should run away while there is time." So saying, they abandoned the meat and the sumptuous meal and ran away.

Having allowed some time for the thieves to run away, Ap Wang Drugye went to the spot and enjoyed a leisurely meal. Afterwards he took the meat and went home.

1.3.1.3. Fairy Tales

The Clever Fox

Once upon a time, there lived a clever fox. One day, the fox was sitting in front of his den experiencing the warmth of the sun. At that time a hungry tiger suddenly appeared before him. The tiger began to think of a way to kill the fox, but the fox knew that. Between their conversations, the fox said to the tiger "Yaa! I was eating my meal but I came out to bask in the sun without finishing the food. Please wait here until I finish my meal and come out." The fox went inside his den.



The tiger waited outside but the fox would not come out of his den. Out of frustration, the hungry tiger went near the door of the den and called out "Oi! Fox, come out of your den." "Please, wait a while, I have not finished my meal." replied the fox. The tiger impatiently waited again. Then the tiger was annoyed and called out louder, "Why is it taking such a long time to finish your food. What are you eating?" "How can I finish eating so fast, I am eating a tiger's heart" the fox replied. The tiger was surprised by this, so he asked again "Where did you get the tiger's heart?" "My hunter friend killed a tiger yesterday and gave the heart to me, saying that he might bring me another heart of a tiger today." Frightened by the response, the tiger disappeared into the forest.

The Wise Son

Once upon a time, in a village there lived an old man and his only son. One day the father fell ill and died. Before he died he said to his son, "Listen carefully my son! Never in your life serve an unkind King, make friends with bad people or marry an unfaithful girl. You must always serve a benevolent King, keep close ties with good friends and settle down with a good wife and live a happy life." With these final words he passed away.

Some years later, the boy attended on an immoral King, associated with a good friend and lived with a disloyal wife to test the advice of his father. One day, the King planned to go for hunting and the boy went together with him as a bodyguard into a dense forest. Suddenly, a tiger appeared from the thick bushes and attacked the King, but the boy killed the tiger and saved the King. The King thanked him for his heroic deed.

One day the boy stole from the palace a peacock, which was the favourite pet of the King, and he left it with his friend. Then he caught a wild peacock and took it home and said to his wife, "This is the King's peacock, I stole it from the palace. I saved the King's life from a tiger but there was no appreciation. So, we are going to kill the peacock for dinner."



They killed the peacock and enjoyed the dinner. A week later, an announcement was given about the lost peacock, stating that the finder would receive an impressive reward. The King's army was spread all over the country in search of the peacock. His friend kept the secret even when he was interrogated, but the greedy wife approached the King and revealed the secret thinking she would be rewarded. Then the King called him and asked "Why did you kill my peacock?" He replied, "I killed it because Your Majesty has not shown any special kindness to me for saving your life from the tiger."

The King became very angry and said "There is no custom of the King showing appreciation to a servant." The King then commanded to his guards, "Take him out of my sight and kill him." At that time, he realised that the King was mean, so he admitted that he had not killed the peacock and he gave it back. So the King released him and he parted from his disloyal wife and left to live in a neighbouring kingdom which was ruled by a benevolent King.

There he served under the benevolent King but stayed with a bad companion. One summer day, the King set out on a long walk and the boy was also accompanying the King along with other attendants. They arrived at a place where there was no water. The water that attendants had been carrying was exhausted. The King was about to die of thirst. Surprisingly, when the boy checked his pocket he found three *Chu-ru-ra* (fruits of emblic myrobalan, commonly called Indian gooseberry) and offered them to the King to help quench his thirst. Later, he kidnapped the Crown Prince and kept him in his house secretly and left the Prince's clothes and ornaments with his friend. An announcement was given out all over the country to find the lost Prince. There was a reward of precious gems to the person who would report the whereabouts of the Prince.

Immediately, the boy's evil friend went to the King and revealed the secret and showed all the belongings of the Prince as proof. The King called the boy and questioned. "Have you murdered my son? The boy replied "Your Majesty, I have indeed murdered the Crown Prince." The King questioned again, "What debt did I owe you that you have to murder my Prince?" The boy replied, "I offered three *Chu-ru-ra* to you and saved Your Majesty earlier, but you did not show me any appreciation. That is why I killed the Crown Prince."

The kind King remembered the unforgettable deed and said, "If you were not there with me, I might have died

and because of your help, now I stand here again to serve my people. Therefore, for the first *Chu ru ra* offered to me, I release you from imprisonment for murdering my son, for the second, I offer you my beautiful daughter as your wife and for the third fruit, I offer half of my kingdom to you for saving my precious life from the deadly thirst.

The boy realised the truth of his father's final words and developed a deep sense of faith and trust in the noble activities of the King. Then, he prostrated many times before the King and submitted, "Your Majesty! Actually, I was testing the truth of the advice my father gave me on his deathbed. I don't want anything in return, but I offer you the Crown Prince, unharmed." The King was very pleased and realised that the boy was an intelligent, wise and devoted son and could make enormous contributions to the country. Thus, he appointed him as his Prime Minister. Due to the wise rule of the benevolent King and his wise minister, the kingdom experienced increased development, peace, tranquillity and happiness.

1.3.2. Religious Oral literature

1.3.2.1. Refuge

To describe the term refuge, one needs to understand this. If anyone is born in one of the three realms of sufferings, namely the hell, the hungry ghost and the animal realms, there is the suffering of extreme heat and cold in the hell realm, there is the suffering of starvation and thirst in the realm of hungry ghosts, and there is the suffering of having to work for others and being consumed as food in the animal realms. Awareness of these sufferings cause constant fear in the mind, which



leads us to have belief in and understanding of the teachings of the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) and therein seek refuge.

“The people of Bhutan, bearing the fruition of their virtuous deeds in the past life and that their strength still unexhausted; both the country and the people, firstly explored and blessed as a hidden land by the second Buddha Ogyen Guru; having been bestowed with the teaching of Vajrayana Tradition by masters and teachers who came in innumerable numbers and caused it to mature through transmission and realisation; the country was named Druk Yul and the people living here were named Drukpa.” (Paraphrased from the *Lhoi Choejung*, the famous history of Bhutan written by the 10th Je Khenpo, Penchen Tenzin Chogyal.)

Starting from the King above, down to the humble citizens in the village, children, and elderly people seeking refuge in the Triple Gem, the thoughts and actions of all are in line with the precepts of the teachings of the Buddha. This has been made possible by the existing harmony between the King, the officials and the citizens. That is why in this increasingly interdependent global community, Bhutan is viewed with love, respect and appreciation.

Owing to their unstinted devotion and confidence there are few Bhutanese of mature years who have not received empowerment and instructions in the teachings or have taken no vow from a spiritual teacher. Moreover, in the morning as soon as they wake up and in the evening before going to bed, our older generation never fail to pay homage and gratitude to their tutelary deities, to their root gurus, to their forefathers and to the King in

their humble words. This rich tradition is, however, on the verge of disappearing, just as the sun sinks over the western horizon, leaving only a dark shadow behind.

1.3.2.2. Morning Prayer

Verse for taking five precepts:

[I] seek refuge in the Lama, the Spiritual teacher;
[I] seek refuge in the Buddha;
[I] seek refuge in the Dharma;
[I] seek refuge in the Sangha
I seek refuge in the excellent objects of refuge (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (*recited a hundred times or more*).

“Root Lama, who is all-knowing! Today due to the everlasting blessings of the Three Jewels and the aspirations of my beloved parents who watch over me with compassion, without any obstacles in my path I am able to see the morning light once more in my life. Please grant me blessing to succeed in my plans and actions today and prevent me from indulging in negative deeds. Please bless me so that I can engage in virtuous deeds that are beneficial both to self and others and accomplish them without any obstacles.” (*These words are followed by the recitation of Mani, Vajra Guru, and end with the prayer of aspiration to liberate all sentient beings from the realm of suffering in this mundane world.*)

1.3.2.3. Evening Prayer

“Yah! By the benevolence and blessings of the Precious Three Jewels and the graciousness of my King, and in particular by the immeasurable love and kindness of my parents, all my activities that I have carried out have been accomplished due to the strength of your enormous wishes. To everyone I offer my deep gratitude. In addition, to my root teacher, tutelary deity and the Three Jewels who have been the sole guardians and source of inspiration to my parents, and to all the sentient beings existing underneath the vast stretch of the sky, I pray for your protection until the breaking of dawn.” (Subsequently, they recite the same mantras cited in the morning as instructed by their Gurus and conclude with prayers of dedication of merits to all the sentient beings.)

1.3.2.4. Empowerment

Within Tibetan Buddhism, an empowerment is a prerequisite stage allowing the practitioner to engage in certain practices in order to benefit others. The term





“empowerment” is the translation of the Tibetan word wang, which literally means “power”. In this context “transmission of power” is more accurate. It refers to the transmission of power from master to disciple, in particular the power of wisdom. Tibetan Buddhism is based on the premise that every being has the potential to attain supreme happiness (also called Enlightenment) and the empowerment is part of the process allowing this potential to fully manifest.

The Buddhist term *wang* means ‘power’ and in this context means ‘empowerment’ that is, the transferring of power from spiritually realised master to disciple. The principal power to be transmitted is the power of wisdom which, with realisation of one’s full potential, leads on to attainment of supreme happiness. The conferring of the empowerment has the effect of preparing the ground (one’s mind stream) for the seed (the teachings) to ripen within. Eventually the seed becomes a shoot, then there is a bud and finally, a flower. That flower is the flowering of the enlightened mind. The empowerment is part of the process allowing the mind’s full potential to be revealed.

Generally, the term *Wang* refers to the power, authority and influence of a person. In the present context of use of the three words *Wang*, *Lung* and *Thri*, the meaning of *Wang* is a wholesome approach to awaken the essence of Buddha Nature in sentient beings and ripen the nature

of mind and to destroy any delusion in our minds so that they become as clear as the immaculate mirror. In other words, *Wang* is a force for destroying afflictive emotions and for making mind as clear as its true nature, pouring the power of wisdom into a clean vessel. By means of rituals, we attain fruition in the form of blessings of the four kayas (dimensions) on our impermanent state and help ripen the true Buddha nature that lies within us.

The empowerment initiates a student into a particular tantric deity practice. By receiving the empowerment the student enters into a samaya connection with the teacher. The ritual for performing an empowerment can be divided into four parts:

1. *Bum pai wang* (Vase empowerment)
2. *Sang wai wang* (Secret empowerment)
3. *She rab yeshe kyi wang* (Wisdom empowerment)
4. *Tshig wang rinpoche* (Precious word empowerment)

The qualities of the empowerments:

1. The Vase (Bumpa) empowerment symbolises purification of the body, senses, and world into the body of the deity and may include a vase filled with water, or washing.
2. The Secret empowerment involves receiving nectar to purify the breath and speech (of the negative

karma accumulated through negative speech) into the speech of that deity.

3. The Wisdom Empowerment cleanses away the impious elements committed through negative thoughts of the mind. It grants the blessing of the Vajra (adamantine hard and clear) mind and enables ascent to the dharmakaya (truth body, or reality body) level of realisation.
4. The Precious Word Empowerment eradicates cognitive obscurations including defilements of body, speech and mind and grants the blessing with the Vajra wisdom and achieves the quality of svabhavikakaya (body of the essential nature of a Buddha) level of realisation. This fourth level can be seen as the sum of the other three levels.

Put in very simple terms, the purpose of receiving Empowerment is to be led safely and surely on the path towards spiritual betterment as a human being so that one may eventually attain the ultimate bliss. Group wangs held by various spiritual masters remain extremely popular in Bhutan. Held usually in the winter months in southern Bhutan, or in summer in the heartland, they are attended by thousands of devotees who have come from far and wide to avail of the opportunity of participation in such an important spiritual event.

1.3.2.5. Oral Transmission

The term *Lung* or *jag lung* means an oral transmission or reading transmission which is passed down from master to student and general devotees without missing any words and without making any commentaries. Nonetheless, simply listening to reading and studying the canons and scriptures is also considered an

empowerment. The student listens to the teacher while reading the text by the master who holds a transmission, ultimately going back to the author of the text. In this way, the student receives the blessing of the lineage without which he or she will not be able to understand the text in depth. Some teachers even consider it inappropriate to read a Dharma text for which one has not yet received a transmission.

As it is said that, “acquiring oral transmission is prodigious learning,” the knowledgeable and learned people are those who have studied from different masters and elder citizens having knowledge of culture. We become knowledgeable by acquiring the following qualities:

Getting an opportunity of learning various fields of knowledge.

Single discipline but learned many times.

Single discipline but learned from different masters.

Learned together with many friends in the institutes.

Gaining these qualities, one becomes knowledgeable and well educated and even clears the doubts and finally acquires the quality of one with profound learning. Therefore, listening and receiving oral transmissions from eminent personalities and even from our parents is very important to become perfect human being.

1.3.2.6. Discourse/Instructions

Thrid literally means to lead or guide or take along the path. In the context of teaching, its meaning is to lead the sentient being to the Buddha land away from the swamp of samsara, or the guiding of sentient beings towards the path of enlightenment away from the vast ocean of worldly sufferings. *Thrid* can be further categorised as



- 1) pedoen lop thrid (guidance according to examples and meanings in the texts and commentaries;
- 2) mar thrid (guidance according to the absolute exposure of the meaning of a subject);
- 3) zub thrid (instruction by focus on detail within the subject)
- 4) sem thrid (mind guidance);
- 5) gom thrid (meditation guidance); and
- 6) thrid zab mo (profound guidance).

However, thrid also provides instruction and sometimes practical guidance in acquainting oneself with and gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Buddha's words and discourses, as taught in detail by the spiritual teachers and masters.

1.3.3. Tuneless Oral Narration

As mentioned earlier, there are oral narrations, called khashey, that require a melody and other khashey that do not. Previously elderly people and people with good oratory skills used to make these narrations according to the situation and their level of knowledge and experience. Narrations could be long and rambling or else presented succinctly in the form of properly arranged prose based on teachings. However, there is no record of established standards in these matters.

1.3.3.1. Departure Salutation or Words of Farewell

Yah! Now you are leaving your home and going to live in places that are far away. You must not engage in activities that are evil and harmful to you as well as to the society. Avoid telling lies, stealing and acting against the laws and always do things according to the principles of dharma. Avoid company of evil people but indulge in acts that are beneficial to yourself and others. Always come to the aid of those who are in dire need of help. Attitudes like these will eventually help you achieve your goals. May you not be left behind so that people look back at you; May you not do things that become their gossip. Be alert in all your plans and actions and be respectful and devoted to the King and your superiors and your colleagues at all times.

This salutation statement is normally made while seeing off any relatives or friends, our children and sometimes even our parents. The content of the statement comprises advice shared with heartfelt purpose, and thus it is called *Lamju-labja* in Dzongkha. Lamju means at the time of separation, and labja means advice.

1.3.3.2. Mourning Statement (narration for the deceased)



Re kab (narration for the deceased) is a traditional custom in Bhutan and increasingly being practised by everyone in the country. The statement is normally made actually for the spirit of a dead person as a parting gift to him/her.

Yah! (Insert name) "Hereafter, you have already left the physical body and today it has been *(Insert days)* since you have abandoned the world. I make this offering (of money) to take with you (symbolically) as a gift to your spiritual Guru. Do not linger around in the intermediate world, but maintain faith in your master and go along the path that will lead you to the Buddha Field."

In certain parts of eastern Bhutan, an eloquent person amongst family members and neighbours at the cremation recalls the activities of the deceased. After every one or two sentences from the narrator, the others weep. This unique tradition is called *Ngü toed (rngu bsotd)* – weeping praise or a type of elegy.

1.3.3.3. Statement of Condolence

Statement of Condolence, called *Sem-so*, is constructed depending upon the situation (usually at the loss of parents, children, spouses or relatives). An example of a statement made to the bereaved family is given below.

This event has been unfortunate and I know you find it very hard to bear the loss. Nonetheless, it is only a matter of time as we are all destined to end in this way. After having been born in the realm of existence, as the saying goes, "there is no calling back after death and there is

no retrieving what is exhausted; in time, even the earth will crack open,” yet grieving is said to only cause the departed soul to suffer more in the intermediate state. Therefore, you must remain strong and concentrate on performing appropriate rituals so that the deceased will be able to find the right path. So you cannot afford to remain weak.

1.3.3.4. Propitiation to the Spirits

It is believed that there are 18 major evils or devils, 80,000 obstacles and 480 different types of diseases prevalent in this world. When we are possessed by any of these evils causing us to feel sick, the first thing we do is to consult the village astrologer to identify the causes. Then we conduct rituals to rectify the spells of the devil that took possession of the sick person by an eloquent person expert in the tradition. The ritual is called *doen chhoe* (propitiation of evil spirits). Laying out all the items required for the rituals, usually comprising all types of food consumed in the community and *sur* (roasted cereal flour mixed with butter and milk), the orator recites the words of propitiation in accordance with the tradition practised in the village, often in the local dialect, further refining the content according to his own skills and experience. A sample of such a propitiation conducted in one of the villages in western Bhutan is given below to illustrate this tradition.

“*Phyi! Phyi! Phyi! Yah*, the (Here the person who propitiates usually inserts the exact male or female birth year of the patient). Whoever is the possessor, whether you are cardinal King of the east or south or west or the north, whether you are the spirit of a dead male or female, an underground being or a local deity, whichever you are and from wherever you hail. You are intangible beings whereas we are tangible human forms. We cannot establish who you really are. But this person you have possessed has neither meat to eat nor the blood to drink. This person is left with just the skin on the outside and just stools and yellowish urine inside. Instead of clinging on to such a being, here are food items in bright and reddish colours and drinks of all kinds obtained from India and Tibet all assembled as offerings for you. These are offered to you with generosity.

On your part, without saying that the lame had not arrived, the deaf had not heard or the blind had not seen, please satisfy yourself with the feast we have offered; without embracing arrogance and jealousy, enjoy the feast with compassionate mind. Think of your root guru and go away while reciting Om Mani Padme

Hung, the mantra of Avalokiteshvara. Because once this consciousness or spirit leaves the body, there is nothing for it to do but wander aimlessly in the intermediate realms. Have you not received the teachings from a Lama while living in this tangible world? Have you never recited the Vajra Guru Mantra or six syllable Mantra? Oh! Please do not do this. There is neither flesh left to eat nor blood left to drink. Starting this day, please let this (man or woman) regain the appetite to eat, peace to sleep, relieve him/her of this ailment just like the loosening of a belt on the waist, just like removing a rock from the bed, just like removing a hat from the head. *Phyi! Phyi! Phyi!* Leave the life, fortune and wealth behind but take the diseases and evils away with you. *Phyi! Phyi! Phyi!*

This is only an example of how evil spirits are appeased to cure a patient in local tradition. Beside this, there are similar narrations made while making offerings to *zhi da* (local deities) and *ten-zug* (offering of domestic animals to the deities).

1.3.4. Riddle

As in other countries, Bhutan has a number of *Ngag tse* (oral games) and *Khar tam* (riddles), a popular indigenous oral tradition. The tradition of oral games is found in different regions in the country under different nomenclature. For example in the Tshangla speaking eastern region it is known as *khar-shigpe*, while it is *shed-lo* in the Cho cha Nga cha speaking areas. The people of Trashigang call it *sho-long* while it is called *drap-drap khyep-khyep* in Paro and Wang (Thimphu) and Thed (Punakha) valleys. The people of Shar valley (Wangduephodrang) call it *shey-shep* and the people of Haa call it *pey-tam* while the Bumthangpas call it by several names such as *meg-meg chop-chop*, *phiko ding ding*, *migto-goto-nyam nyam*. In Kurtok (Lhuentse) district they call it *megpa chop chop* and the people of Merak and Sakteng call it *en-tshen chi go do*. In the southern region they call it *gaong khane katha*. Their ways of questioning also differ from each other.

Khar tam is an oral game played between two persons or groups in order to test each other's quickness of wit. In the old days people used to bet on the outcome, with stakes ranging from personal items to the family home and even land ownership, often leading to the loser being ousted from his home village. This system of betting seems to point to the use of the word Khar in this game. Khar means home and tam means speech or statement. The two words have been put together as Khar-tam, to mean puzzling statements put forward

for the opponents to solve. There are superstitious beliefs concerning the involvement of evil spirits while the game is being played. The believers are mostly the Tshangla speakers. It is said that after the game has been concluded, one must drive away or see off the evil spirits beyond the country's border. This is called *Don nung-mey* (see off the evil spirits) in Tshangla language. If it is not done properly, it is believed that mishaps will occur in the village at any time and at any place.

Riddle is played like this- Question: "A thing that shows fist from the Sky? What is it? Do you know?" "If not, can you give that Mansion, Temple, Monastery, Dzong, Village or good livestock, whichever it may be?" If the respondent does not know the answer, then he /she should admit "I don't know. Have it! What is the answer?" "Ok. The Mansion is now mine." The answer is "The flower bud of the banana." Thus, he/she wins the bet. Then it is the turn of the Respondent to ask the question, and so forth with the stake remaining the same.

In the context of games, in general terms a riddle is a question testing ingenuity in finding the answer. A riddle may sometimes be called an enigma, meaning a puzzling thing. Another term for riddle in conundrum, but this is generally used more specifically in reference to a riddle with a pun, or play on words, as its answer.

Bhutanese riddles are of two types, generally fitting the definitions above:

- *Khar tam thung ku* (short riddle) *enigma*: a puzzle with a short answer
- *Khar tam rem* (extended riddle) *conundrum*: a riddle in which a fanciful question is answered with a witticism.

Elderly people with good knowledge of their local culture say "There are stories from the olden days when the loser had to go into exile". Riddles are played mostly for entertainment but they also test how quick-witted one is. People of any age can participate and it is a platform to showcase astuteness and also a sharing and learning process. It is said that Khar tam thung-ku have always been the most popular amongst Bhutanese and that Khar tam rem are rarely practiced in the country. Educationists consider Khar tam rem to have been introduced by Indians and other foreign teachers after the establishment of the new education system in the early 1960s. A new oral tradition, the conundrum enriches cultural heritage, notwithstanding.

Following are some examples of enigmas:

1.3.4.1. Examples of riddles

Western Region

- It drinks from the dark lake; rests in the cliff but stays in the ground. What is it? *Writing pen.*
- A stooped old woman never satisfies her hunger. What is it? *Sickle.*
- Hands always stretching but no one gives. What is it? *Tree branches.*

Tshangla speakers

- It retreats during the day but comes out from the cave at night. What is it? *Door bolt.*
- It becomes rich at night but poor during the day. What is it? *Peg to tether the cattle.*
- A tall girl carrying a flat stone on her back. What is it? *Fingernails.*

Merak and Sakteng

- An tshen chi go go. Ten tall sisters each carrying a flat stone on her back. What is it? *The ten fingers.*
- An tshen chi go go. There is a huge lake on either side of a gigantic mountain. What is it? *Nose and two eyes.*
- An tshen chi go go. Two sisters, competing for their height. What is it? *Two pestles in motion.* (That is, pestles used for pounding rice or roasted corn)

Kurtoep speakers

- Sholo sholo doh sholo. A red bag with golden coins inside. What is it? *Red chillies.*
- Sholo sholo doh sholo. A very tall person wearing a half gho. What is it? *Prayer flags.*
- Sholo sholo doh sholo. Beneath the earth, a pair of cymbals beating. What is it? *Turnip.*





Bumthang

- *meg meg chop chop/ phe ko ding ding/ mig to gu to nyam nyam*

One who questions: *mig to gu to nyam nyam*

Responder: *nyam nyam* (only once while starting)

- A handful of crystal stones lying in a cave. What is it? *Teeth*.
- Two bulls are about to fight, but hindered by a ridge. What is it? *Two eyes and the nose*.
- A hermit meditating in a cave. What is it? *Tongue*.

Lho tsham speakers

- Channel of the sky, fields of leaves, five assistants but a lone worker. What is it? *Pen*
- Spears on the tip of a small tree. What is it? *Wheat*
- Small and tiny figure but, jumps energetically. What is it? *Grasshopper*

1.3.4.2. Examples of Conundra

Question: There is a rooster perching on the tree. It is facing towards north and its tail pointing to the south. As strong wind blows from south to north, if the rooster laid an egg, on which side will it fall?

Answer: Rooster will never lay an egg.

Question: Once in a village, there lived four friends. All of them are physically impaired. One is blind; one deaf, another dumb and the last one has no legs. They have planned to make a visit to another village. So, how will they go?

Answer: Eventually, limbless will guide and the dumb will carry him and the other two will follow.

1.3.4.3. See-off the Riddle Evil Spirits

Though there is neither written nor oral account for evidence of evil spirits' involvement in the riddle game yet, that belief still prevails in the mind of Tshangla people. As it is part of a cultural tradition which has

been handed down through the centuries and taught to them by their forefathers they didn't see any need to question them as to how the belief came about. This is a sad situation, as there are hardly any villagers who have any knowledge about how the evil spirit is supposed to dwell in the riddle game. And, why drive evil spirits beyond borders? However, the wordings are narrated by an eloquent person and others say the names of different places and gradually lead up to calling out the names of places that are beyond the borders.

Thus, I present here the wordings of how to see off the evil spirits. Lyrics are actually the names of different tools associated with *kam-thag* (cotton weaving); *kre-shing* (machine to segregate cotton and seed), *sonda-ring* (spin wheel), *wai-dum* (reed), *pun pa-lang* (end feed shuttle), *key-thag* (wrist belt), *shugu-dong* (bigger reed to help heddles separate the threads) and *thag-chung* (beater plank).

Lyrics

- *kre kre kre-ta shing| son son son-da-ring| wai-dum dum thur mey-ne| pun pa-lang thur mey-ne| key-thag dom thur mey ne| sho-gu-dong dong thur mey-ne| thag-chung dong thur meyne| O sheg-pa-ya don?* (Where did the evil spirit arrive?) Mention the name of villages and places.

- *kre kre kre-ta shing| son son son-da-ring| wai-dum dum thur mey-ne| pun pa-lang thur mey-ne| key-thag dom thur mey ne| sho-gu-dong dong thur mey-ne| thag-chung dong thur meyne| O sheg-pa-ya don?*

(Where did the evil spirit arrive?) Mention the name of villages and southern places.

- *kre kre kre-ta shing| son son son-da-ring| wai-dum dum thur mey-ne| pun pa-lang thur mey-ne| key-thag dom thur mey ne| sho-gu-dong dong thur mey-ne| thag-chung dong thur meyne| O sheg-pa-ya don?* (Where did the evil spirit arrive?) Mention the name of places across border.

1.3.5. Tongue-twister

Chetsal or tongue-twister is another form of sung or spoken word game, using words or groups of words designed to be difficult to articulate properly, usually because of a succession of similar sounds. Tongue-twisters can be long or short and are popular among Bhutanese of all ages.

There are countless tongue-twisters in different languages in Bhutan. There is neither an age barrier nor the need for a good place to play this complicated word game, therefore young and old alike can play it anytime and anywhere. Nowadays, every district in Bhutan is experiencing the effects of rapid changes and the trend towards globalisation. Due to rural-urban migration and youngsters' involvement in modern education and other forms of entertainment, the tongue-twister game is increasingly left unpractised and consequently has now become an endangered oral tradition. Nevertheless, there are elderly people who have good knowledge of this game and there is still a chance to revive and document it.

Following are a few examples of the tongue twister.

1.3.5.1. Short Tongue-twister

Dzongkha:

- *Si si sha mu | ka sha tsa za sho*
- *Thab ki jab ki tsha ja zi | ka sha tsha za sho*
- *Thab ki jab ki ja zi nyim di tsha ja zi*
- *Gu mai shom da tu pag pa | se se shom da sab ke ke*
- *Nya rui li nya | li rui li li* (Nya means arrow and li means bow)
- *Pha gi lo gi ja; jai gu to tsha za sho.*

1.3.5.2. Longer Tongue-twister

In the longer tongue-twister, one goes on repeating the sentence as long as one's breath lasts without missing the order and clarity of the words.

Dzongkha:

- *Pchi me thang gi poen lop le | ji li ka thra chi da ma –thra nyi | ji li chi lu jum chi | ji li nyi lu jum nyi | ji li sum lu jum sum | ji li zhi lu jum zhi | ji li nga lu jum nga | ji li dru lu jum dru | ji li duen lu jum duen | ji li gye lu jum gye | bjili gu lu jum gu | bji li chu tham lu jum chu tham | (and so on)*
- *Ta chi ga chi sab chi thiw chi | ta nyi ga nyi sab nyi thiw nyi | ta sum ga sum sab sum thiw sum | ta zhi ga zhi sab zhi thiw zhi | ta nga ga nga sab nga thiw nga | ta dru ga dru sab dru thiw dru | ta duen ga duen sab duen thiw duen | ta gye ga gye sab gye thiw gye | ta gu ga gu sab gu thew gu | ta chu tham ga chu tham sab chu tham thew chu tham | (and so on)*

1.3.6. Childlore

Popularly known as *aloi lu* in Dzongkha, childlore is the folklore or folk culture of children and young people. It is concerned with activities which are learned and passed on by children to one another, through games, songs, chants and so forth. Childlore chants of western Bhutan have no tune so it is no more than just a recitation as a poem. Childlore in Kheng and eastern Bhutan comprises chants sung or recited without melody. There are a large number of childlore chants and songs in Bhutan with similar styles but in different language. Almost all childlore chanting contains rhyming words and lines linking from one to the other.

1.3.6.1. Western Region

Let the children play;
They need a small basket to play;
The basket needs canes to weave;
The cane needs a knife to cut;
But the knife is with the blacksmith;
You need *la-tsi* (musk) to please the blacksmith.
But, *la tsi* is with the brokpa;
You need *bangchang* to please the brokpa;
You need a *chang sho* to sieve the chang.

So, you want a mare;
And you want a foal from a mare;
You want to send the foal to India;
And bring money from India;
So you want to take money to Tibet;
And bring flag clothes from Tibetan;
And hoist a flag on the roof of your home.



1.3.6.2. Kheng Speakers (central Bhutan)

Brother Moon!
 Give me the leftover food;
 It was kept on a shelf;
 Where is the shelf?
 It was burnt in a fire;
 Where is the fire?
 It was put out by water;
 Where is the water?
 It was drunk by an ox;
 Where is the ox?
 It fell down a cliff;
 Where is the cliff where the ox fell?
 A flood washed it away;
 Where are the remains washed away by the flood?
 Artemisia plants have grown over it;
 Where are Artemisia plants?
 An ox has eaten them;
 Where is the ox?
 It was taken for ploughing;
 Where is the ploughed land?
 Maize has been grown;
 Where are the maize crops?
 It has been cooked;
 Where is the cooked maize?
 It was kept on a shelf;
 Where is the shelf?
 It was burnt by a fire.

1.3.6.3. Tshangla Speakers

Oh Brother Moon!
 Where do you sleep?
 On the bank of Kuri (chu);
 What do you eat?
 [I] eat rice;
 What is your curry?
 Fish from the Gongri (chu);
 Where is your leftover food?
 [Left] on the manual grinding stone;
 Where is the manual grinder?
 It was burnt by fire;
 Where is fire?
 It was put out by water;
 Where is water?
 It was drunk by *ja tsha* (a hybrid ox);
 Where is the ox?
 The ox was taken to the field for ploughing;
 Where is the field?
 It was scratched up by the chicken.
 Where is the chicken?
 It is on the man shing (name of a tree);

Where is the man shing?
 It was cut down by the axe;
 Where is the axe?
 The axe was thrown in the blacksmith's workshop with
 a clang.

1.3.7. Moral Instructions

Moral instructions deal with skills and qualities that should be learnt, secured and practised that have been formulated by thinkers, leaders, teachers and elders and other wise beings in accordance with the needs of worldly living. Sometimes they are also known as the oral instructions of spiritual teachers, who have created them as the guiding precepts for their followers and other lay people. As such, they are called *lab ja* (*bslab bya*) or *zhal dam* (precious words) in Dzongkha.

Once born into this world as human beings, it is most important that both the spiritual and temporal aspects of our lives be conducted in accordance with the dharma and with the law. Therefore, it is important to learn the meaning and implications of moral instructions so that we understand the difference between good and bad acts, so that can avoid bad thoughts and acts just as we reject poisons, and can embrace good thoughts and acts just as we cherish medicines. In this way it is possible to be of service in our beautiful mountain kingdom, just as the sun in a cloudless sky is able to send its light and warmth to all parts of the world in equal measure.

Moral instructions are given in order to guide others in their thoughts and acts. Therefore such instructions should be provided with a calm but assured approach, sometimes with great humility, sometimes with feeling, and often outwardly in a remonstrative manner. But



inwardly the goal should be to help others to be true to their fundamentally good and compassionate natures.

Moral instructions are of different types as given below:

1. Instructions related to dharma given by lamas and saints,
2. Guidelines of our forefathers to steer their young people and children along the right path,
3. Affectionate and Reassuring;
4. Reproach or Rebuke,
5. Encouragement, and
6. Indirect advice.

1.3.7.1. Religious Precepts

Koen chog sum (the Three Jewels) including the root teachers are the ultimate guardian, protector and refuge for all Bhutanese who have faith in the Buddha Dharma. For Buddhists, there are three obligatory instructions to follow. These comprise three abstentions, three adoptions and three general instructions.

a. The three abstentions

- i. After taking refuge in the Buddha, do not take refuge in mundane gods.
- ii. After taking refuge in the Dharma, refrain from harming any sentient beings.

- iii. After taking refuge in the Sangha, do not rely on people who oppose the sacred doctrine.

b. The three adoptions

- i. Having taken refuge in the Buddha, do not neglect or destroy old images or any material pieces found from damaged images.
- ii. Starting from a single letter which contains the meaning of sacred doctrine, meditate on this and take it as the Buddha Dharma.
- iii. Pay respect not only to monks but also to those who wear red, yellow and orange and even to a piece of cloth lying on the ground.

c. The three general instructions

- i. After taking refuge in the Buddha, one should have the same regard and respect for an image resembling the Buddha or one that is damaged as for a true image of the Buddha.
- ii. After taking refuge in the Dharma, one should regard even a single syllable that is related to the Dharma as the precious Dharma of the Buddha.
- iii. After taking refuge in the Sangha, one should avoid abusing anything that bears the sign of the member of Sangha or carelessly disposing of any cloth that is red, orange or yellow in colour.



1.3.7.2. General Instructions

Having settled in the community of worldly beings, no matter how superior you may be in terms of your social class, knowledge and rank or how humble you may be, it is very important to observe and live in accordance with the cultural and traditional norms inherited from our forefathers. Therefore, all good and positive activities that benefit not only ourselves but even all the humanity are to be followed and practiced in accordance with the instructions of the enlightened beings. The following instructions are translated from the works of Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyalsen (1182-1251) written in the *“leg she thruel gi dra wa”*.

Alas!

The fortunate ancient time has gone;
 The wise and knowledgeable elders have passed away;
 Stupid people are now born;
 The knot of sacred Dharma has loosened;
 The fragile rope of human traditions has been disconnected;
 The golden yoke of secular law is broken;
 The ocean of basic negotiations has dried;
 The Tiger pattern of heroic courage has disappeared;
 The essence of prosperity and shame has been vanished;
 The soul of nobilities is unprotected;
 While the behaviour of immoral human beings is allowed;
 Ignoring the future advantages;
 Counting only for temporary existence;
 Neglecting the noble culture;
 Adopting the deluded cultures;
 Not following the advice of eminent beings;
 But following the foolish people;
 Not equalizing the noble acts;
 Seeing numerous people engaging in unwholesome acts;
 Instead of following the noble ones.

Thereby, in order to bear good fruition, whatever you undertake first, build confidence and trust in the Three Jewels. Though success depend entirely on the previous karma and accumulated merits, cautious acts at present times is important. Enthusiasm and vigour are important tools to accomplish your dreams and wishes. Attaining the heights will be difficult for those that lack counselling and forward moving. Knowing one's limit of the present is the ultimate sign of a courageous man.

1.3.7.3. Heartfelt Advice

Do not show too much softness even to your child,
 He/she cannot adjust with the customs later;
 Never hate too much even to your enemies;
 One will bear the karmic consequence even if you are victorious;
 Do not be too dependent even to your beloved ones,
 You may be hostile to each other later;
 Do not explode too much even to your servant;
 There will be no one around you later;
 Do not suppress too much on your subject;
 They will keep in their mind;
 Do not act partially even to your friends;
 It will create wound in their heart;
 Do not instruct odd customs even to others;
 It will harm even to you later;

The kindness of a person is dependent on his/her character;
 Be humble,
 Humbleness depends on how talkative you are;
 Do not talk nonsense.
 The distinction of intelligence and stupidity depends on how one understands the wisdom in others;
 Take time to judge,
 Cleverness and foolishness depends on how independent one is;
 Be independent.
 Do not talk too much,
 Do not forget whatever you said,
 Do not accept everything that is offered;
 Accomplish whatever you have accepted.
 Do not admit any questions;
 Be absolutely sure what you have admitted
 A bad person is unfit in society
 Be wholesome person
 A garrulous person is unfit among friends
 Do not talk too much.
 A bad person by nature is unfit for company;
 A person without the knowledge of tripitaka is unfit as a Buddha's follower;
 A person not afraid of defilements is unfit among dharma practitioners.

[Translation ends here.]

Being born as human beings we become susceptible to degenerate actions. Despite our understanding of the consequences of virtues and non-virtues we are often influenced by the lure of ignoble thoughts and refuse to take heed of the guidance and advices of the root lamas, teachers, parents and siblings. As the saying goes, “those

who love us sound harsh as beneficial medicines taste bitter,” though we consider them as harsh, scolding and physical punishments are intended to divert us from the paths of wrong doing.

1.3.8. Proverbs and Aphorisms

In Bhutan, proverbs and aphorisms are widely used both in general conversation and talks, and also in more structured settings. This is popularly known as *Pche tam* or *Pe tam* and also considered as one of the ornaments of the art of speech. Literally, *Pche/pe* means example, simile, illustration and *tam* means speech, conversation, talk or an account. Thus, *Pche tam* is a figure of speech which appears often in a phrase or short verses. *Pche tam* are composed by intellectuals and wise people, based on after based on experiences and truths and often used to show the right direction to youths. Some proverbs are extracted from lozey and it appears in verse, prose and sometimes in mixture of both verse and prose.

The terms *Pche tam*, *Pe tam*, *Kha tam*, *Leg she*, *Lung drang* and *Lab ja* are synonyms and used by different people in their respective languages. They are considered the ornaments to the way of speaking and important part of our speech.

As “*proverbs are the ornaments of speech*” without the use of some proverbs our conversations are like dead plants without leaves and flowers, while a speech decorated with proverbs is well received by listeners. Proverbs are classified as two types:

1.3.8.1. Religious proverbs

Any proverbs that convey the concept of sacred Dharma and are told by spiritual masters, parents and elders to guide their followers on the path of virtue are called *choe drel gi pche tam* (religious or spiritual proverbs).

For example:

- It is one thing if you are blessed by the wisdom eye, but the rest of us ordinary people must make our own fortune.
- The consequence of mischief done to a nun is more severe than the benefit of circumambulating the sacred place of Tsari (said to be the most difficult of all pilgrimages).
- Making pilgrimage to India and Tibet just by dreaming will not help purify the bodily defilements. Being good at teaching will not remove defilement, being good at crying, cannot remove the sorrow.

- Peace and suffering are like the sun in the summer season; it shines and then disappears a moment later.

1.3.8.2. Laity Proverbs

Jig ten pai pe tams (secular proverbs) are mostly associated with the daily activities of ordinary people. These are mostly composed by experienced and learned elders and by the enlightened beings to direct our actions along the right path.

- The bird on top of the tree and the sun on top of the pass. Sow the seeds in spring, rear livestock in summer, store the grain in autumn and conduct rituals in the winter season.
- The normal traditional life of the village, even the mighty King cannot change.
- If you want to feed on a boneless fish and reap fruits without undergoing hardships, you must be born a fortunate person.
- Eat what is acceptable to your body, attire yourself in accordance with time and tradition, speak as appropriate for the occasion, do your work at the right time and make your best effort, bear burdens according to your strength, and make plans according to your ability.

1.3.9. Poem

A literary work written in a meter, verse, prose or in a mixture of both verse and prose with various types of speech used is called *Nyan tsom* or just *Tsom* (ode, a poem or poetry). These are written according to the level of education and knowledge of the writer with the purpose of communicating to the readers or listeners the intended messages in poetic sentences.

These written pieces can either be sung or just narrated and mostly written in Choekey. The subject of *Tsom* covers all genres such as narratives for example legends, stories, human dilemmas, relationships, descriptions, commentaries and elegy, satirical and verse fable etc. Beside these, *Ka-tsom* (alphabetical poetry), is a unique poetry genre and it is as popular among farmers as among literate and/or articulate people. It is a type of acrostic poem whose first line begins with the first Dzongkha letter (ka), follows alphabetically and ends with the last letter (A). Thus it will have 30 lines. Similarly, there is an ode called *a Tsom* (reversed alphabetical poetry) it starts with the last letter (A)

and ends with the first letter (ka). This literary form became popular among common people to describe the world around them which is sensitively portrayed through many symbols and metaphors. Lyricists were mostly lamas, monks and scholars who had and have undergone monastic education and are highly learned persons. In the Tibetan way of definition, *nyen ngag* refers not merely to poetry in verse but to pleasant composition, a Buddhist tradition derived from ancient Indian poetic text called Kavya in Sanskrit. Normally, *Tsom* appears in any of these forms: *Tshig ched* (verse), *Tshig lhug* (prose), and *Pel ma* (the two mixed in alternating sequence).

Tshig ched simply means that each line of text has a certain number of words to it, having odd numbers starting from 5, 7, 9, 11 till 21 although longer lines are occasionally seen. Tshig lhug is text which has not been written in lines of defined numbers of words and hence which is literally 'relaxed text'. Pel ma is a type of written composition where verse and prose are alternated by turns.

1.3.9.1. Religious Poetry

Khedrup Kunga Wangpo (1505-) the heart son of Vidyadhara Padma Lingpa (1450-1521) composed with whatever emanated in his mind, at the time of gaining realisation and experience while meditating at the cave of Rangjung Pal Gyi Phodrang at the neck of a mountain which looked like a great gliding Garuda near the hidden country of Khenpa Jong in Kurtoed.

[I] supplicate to all the venerable gurus;
May your blessings purify all my defilements;
May I be naturally diffused with the sacred doctrine;
In the sphere of cloudless light;
Blessed by the essence of Sun and Moon;
Ornamenting the four worlds beautifully;
Clouds of the southern world are not affected by
darkness;
On the mountain tops rising like pinnacles;
Dwells the carnivorous Snow Lion;
Content with the turquoise coloured mane;
The fierce blizzard does not cover it;
In the deep golden Ocean;
Lives the blessed skilful fish;
While pursuing the pleasure of food;
The perilous sharp hook does not harm it;
In the exquisite mature forest;
Live the agile, acrobatic monkeys;
While it is their destiny to pick flowers;

Missed the hands of the hooligans;
The centre of a vajra cliff;
Is the blessed ground of the Garudas, King of birds;
Whilst eating its meal, the black snakes;
Does not disturb the ferocious mind of Vajrapani;
In the magnificent mansion of the world;
Kunga Wangpo has settled well;
Practicing the Buddha Dharma by destiny;
Is not affected by the untimely death;
The monks who are connected by karmic destiny;
Well settled under a Lama;
Practicing on the sacred teaching;
Do not embrace negative thoughts and disloyalty;
To the knowledge of primordial purity;
There exist sectarianism and prejudice without limit;
To an unblemished ultimate essence;
Do not bathe with incidental impure water;
To all the faithful people congregated here;
I, Ngagi Wangpo the aged one;
While expanding the branches of realisation;
It is an inherent nature of varied study;
Who will dishonour to the words of Vajra;
What certainty is there of the wrong viewed persons;
Create mental base to practice in accordance with the
Dharma;

1.3.9.2. Narrative Poem

A narrative poem extracted from the *sung bum* of the 9th *Je Khenpo* (chief abbot) Shakya Rinchen (1710-1759) and presented here in translation.

In the mountainous country filled with bountiful
flowers;
An open place where wild animals make playful
dance;
Where one can hear melodious songs of birds;
In a peaceful solitude and sacred hermitage;
A hermit, contemplating of visualization;
From you guys, who enjoy health and wealth?
Milk and butter along with a letter;
Sent with pure faith and loyalty;
I have received parcel without any damages;
[I] the follower of Buddha, dwelling in this place;
Without having any part of vast knowledge;
Have been practicing just bearing the name of *Lama*;
My life while connected with distractions;
Just like the pond where the flow of the stream is dried
from above;
Without realising, it is being gradually ended;
While the death arrives inadvertently;
There is no solution but to suffer as destiny;
Means the nose ring that binds you as humans;





The assembly of self without freedom;
 Whoever we see fascinates our mind;
 While you are in a hermitage comfortably;
 Like the yogis of the ancient times;
 Spending time committed towards Dharma;
 This is fruition of numerous generations;
 Of accumulation by countless virtues;
 Again towards the useless distractions in this life;
 By not involving in such meaningless acts;
 Just like the freedom gained by supreme masters;
 [If] concentrated on the success and clearing doubts;
 Fulfills the great achievements for both present and future;
 This is a clearly said as the heartfelt advice.

1.3.9.3. Alphabetic Poem (kha tsom)

A poem constructed in alphabetical order is known as a kha tsom. Each letter generates a poetic sentence and yet connects the essence with the other sentences. Translations of such a poem cannot do full justice in the same sequence. Given below is a praising alphabetical poem by khenpo (master/scholar) Tshering Dondup dedicated to his root master, His Holiness Drub Wang Pema Norbu Rinpoche, and presented here in translation:

May all be good and well!
 From the manifestation of ultimate emptiness of primordial purity;
 A physical manifestation with incandescent rainbow;
 However, [its] an excellent master that liberates all the sentient beings;
 It is you who knows! My only refuge Drub Wang Lama;
 Melodious tone of speech without noisy crowds;
 By the nectar of heartfelt instructions with completeness;
 To the sentient beings attracted towards the foodstuff;
 [He] takes care with love and affection like the rays of the Moon;
 The essence of vast and in depth knowledge of Tathgata;
 [It is] a natural condition of inseparable union of experience and emptiness;
 The acquired profound knowledge of the present are;
 Beyond the dualistic fixation of immature thoughts and expressions;
 Within the dharmadhatu sphere of cognizance and bliss of pramita;
 Though the guardian of sentient beings, the single father had already left;
 An affection of love similar to the cow herder;

There is no other companion than you, the protector of all the sentient beings;
 In the world of numerous sacred places of India, Nepal Tsari;
 Undergoing unbearable hardships of heat and cold weather;
 For the thriving Dharma of teaching and practice in all the directions;
 No monk or unachieved master can compare with you;
 Lord of ordained monks wearing red and yellowish robes;
 The great Yogi, who has no concept of accepting and rejecting of material things;
 The steersman of all desperate and helpless sentient beings;
 You are the definite wondrous emanation of bodhisattvas;
 In the world bounded by eight worldly concerns of five poisons;
 Even traveling all over the directions throughout days and nights;
 As you are the only personification of love and kindness;
 Please! Hold on till the attainment of the land and the path of Buddha;
 Extremely amazing the qualities of you, the protector;
 [It is] beyond our knowledge being the principle of *ati yoga*;
 Nevertheless, as propelled by my unwavering faith;
 [I] make offering of your great qualities, my Lord, in this melodious song.

1.3.9.4. Ode of Advice

Ode of advice of His Eminence, Lama Norbu Wangchuk alias Tshangkha Rinpoche to his nephew, Choeki Dorji:

Listen here! [My] nephew *Choe dor* (short form of Choeki Dorje);
 As I (maternal uncle) become heavy, burdened by age;
 Even though the time of singing has passed;
 Some kind words are offered here for you;
 As a sign of mastering the knowledge of general science;
 Words as beautiful as lotus plants,
 Decorated by the ornaments of poetry,
 Should enchant the hearts of scholarly masters;
 As a sign of mastering the unique internal science;
 The great and astounding skandhas as the basis;
 By the might of realising the ultimate nature;

Should fascinate the heart of scholars who realised the essence;
 As a sign of mastering the vital Sutra and Mantra;
 The essence of Buddha nature as the basis;
 Knowing all the cyclic existence and transcendence;
 Should charm the heart of all supreme teachers;
 As sign of mastering the four reflections of mind;
 Even the well-being of celestial realms;
 Seeing the suffering of heat and cold of the hell below;
 Should strike their desiring mind;
 As a sign of mastering the three perfect qualities of refuge;
 Even if you are asked to select between state affairs and death;
 By not abandoning the Triple Gem which liberates our souls;
 Should captivate the hearts of people with no faith;
 As a mark of training the mind to be compassionate;
 As you cannot bear the suffering of your parents in this life;

By benefiting even the perpetual enemies;
 Should transform the minds of bigoted people;
 As the sign of knowing the nature of cyclic existence and transcendence;
 By giving away the present well-being to the wind;
 And making great effort to attain the ultimate bliss;
 Should appeal to the hearts of people leading purposeless lives;
 You, Choekyi Dorje [my] youthful nephew;
 Examine meaning of the seven points of realisation above;
 No need to advise if you see their meaning;
 If you have not, stimulate yourself again and again;
 [Thus] from Tshangkha monastery;
 By an old man of dog year cast aside from the mist of mankind;
 Composed a poem of what came to mind.

Written quickly while in the bed of my retreat.

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CHAPTER TWO

Tshering Choki and Galey Wangchuk

PERFORMING ARTS & TRADITIONAL GAMES

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2.1. PERFORMING ARTS

A country's identity is defined by its culture and tradition. Among the most visible aspects of these features is the tradition of performing arts. A country's performing arts reflect its core principles and values. That is why in Bhutan the various types of its performing arts are truly representative of its diverse, yet inclusive Buddhist values and ethos. From mask dance to traditional songs, all the performing arts form part of the tradition that has moulded the Bhutan's identity since the teaching of enlightenment was brought to the country in the 8th century by the Indian Buddhist sage, Padmasambhava, known in Bhutan as Guru Rinpoche. Furthermore, the system of governance which was developed in the 17th century under Bhutan's unifier, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651) was also based on Buddhist principles. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal instituted the governing system of *choesi zungdrel* (dual system of government combining both religious and temporal affairs) and made *Punthang Dewachenpoi Phodrang* (the blissful palace of heaped jewels) in Punakha as the capital. He then systematized the culture of the state, including court etiquette and the tradition thereof. In celebrations, the Zhabdrung sponsored lavish state ceremonies signifying the emergence of a new state with a unique and distinctive identity that would not submit to any of its powerful neighbours with their ancient civilizations. Since that time, the distinctive tradition of the performing arts of Bhutan has been fashioned and gradually refined over many years.

However, the Bhutanese performing arts, like every other facet of Bhutanese culture, were given further enhancement with the 1907 establishment of the Wangchuck Dynasty, which is not only known for its benevolent rule, but also for great patronage of art and culture. These forms of intangible arts have been greatly consolidated and enhanced through the reigns of successive monarchs. Today, the performing arts are the defining features of Drukyl, 'The Land of the Thunder Dragon.'

Traditionally, the performing arts are categorised into *gar cham* (mask dance) and *lu* (song).

These are discussed fully in this chapter, along with regional and folk dances and songs, drama, and more recent developments of the performing arts in the modern era. In recent years a vibrant film industry has emerged and new productions on traditional themes and/or the retelling of traditional tales have been surprisingly well received by the youth of modern Bhutan. However, discussion of film, though warranted, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

2.1.1. The Mask Dance

Gar cham or mask dance is a tradition that has prevailed for as long as the country's history. *Gar* literally means the movement with some twisting of the body while *cham* means movement of hands and legs. Therefore, *gar cham* means dance performed by combination of twist of body and movement of hands and legs. Mask dances are normally performed during an annual ritual called *tshechu* (described in Chapter Three), which means the 10th Day, considered to be the birth day of Bhutan's patron saint, Padmasambhava, commonly known as Guru Rinpoche.

Tshechu and *gar cham* are not only splendid theatrical performances of the highest order, they also have significant spiritual and cultural connotations. For the lay onlookers whose perceptions are obscured by delusions, watching the mask dancers perform their roles as symbolic manifestations of higher beings and deities, enables them to appreciate the values of human life and encourages them to pay homage to the sublime beings. That is why mask dances are an integral part

of the Bhutanese cultural identity. These dances are but dramatization of the teachings of enlightened spiritual masters for the benefit of sentient beings of the three realms. These dances are said to have the power to liberate beings who are merely watching them performed. Therefore, of the six ways of liberation, mask dances are considered as "thong droe" meaning liberation by watching.

Mask dance was first introduced by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century, when he came to Bumthang at the invitation of Sendha Gyalpo, the King of Chagkhar, to subjugate Shelging Karpo, the local deity. Guru Rinpoche subjugated Shelging Karpo by miraculous dances performed by his manifestations. By the middle of the 15th century, the treasure revealer, Pema Lingpa had introduced a new set of sacred mask dances, the *Peling Ging-Sum* (the three dances of *ging*, or emanations of Guru Rinpoche, in the Pema Lingpa tradition) comprising *Jug ging* (dance holding stick), *Dri ging* (dance holding sword) and *Nga ging* (dance holding

drum). In the 17th century, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal introduced mask dances with Drukpa special characteristics like the dance of Mahakali which is performed during annual festivals dedicated to the deity.

Physical Gestures: As an art form, dance may appear to be similar to any other performing arts, but the Bhutanese mask dances not only provide joy and happiness, but also enable the spectators to acquire spiritual merit and liberation from the worldly woes. The mudras and gestures are symbolic of the nine skills of dancing, eight divine manifestations of peaceful and wrathful deities, which remind people of their spiritual and moral duties and obligations. To acquaint oneself with the identity of each mask in the dance is considered beneficial for individuals when in the intermediate state after life.

Visualization: A mask dancer should visualize his body to be that of a divine being while performing the dance. He should visualize his speech to be the sound of mantras and make it powerful enough to dispel obstacles on the path to human enlightenment. He should envision his mind as the repository of the three types of meditation (embodying right concentration, right mindfulness and right view) and the four sublime states (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity).

Significance: At the mundane level, the mask dances entertain people and at the same time reaffirm the devotion and commitment of human beings to lead morally sound and honest lives. At the ultimate level, they serve as the means for liberation from the worldly sufferings and the attaining of final enlightenment. People of all ages like to watch mask dances during festivals with devotion and respect. Foreign visitors also show the same amount of respect for the Bhutanese dances and Bhutanese dance troupes are often invited to perform in other countries.

In general, gar cham is broadly classified in three categories as follows:

Truelpai dzuthruel gyi cham are dances of magical manifestations. This kind of dance has its origin in the supernatural and spontaneous appearance of dancers typically associated with Guru Rinpoche. Guru Rinpoche took many miraculous forms while taming malevolent and adverse forces during his conversion of the elements in such places as Bumthang and Samye. Thus, dances like Guru Tshengye (Dance of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche) are called *truelpai dzuthruel gi cham*.

Kater dagnang gi cham or dances passed on by manifestations of gurus and tutelary deities in visions, are those performed by luminaries such as Tertoen Pema Lingpa and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in their meditative visions upon instructions from their spiritual gurus and tutelary deities. Dances are also composed by *tertoens* (treasure-revealers) to aid their discovery of treasures. Peling Tercham (Treasure Dance of Pema Lingpa) and Thimphu Lhamoi Drubchen Cham are the examples of this dance.

Namthar lu zhizhagpai cham or dances based on biographical stories or accounts, are creations based on the biographies of famous spiritual personalities like Jetsun Milarepa (a Tibetan Buddhist saint) from whom the dance *shawo shachi* (Dance of the Stag and Hounds) which also incorporates the drama *acho phento* (the Hunter and Servant Dance) emanates. Another famous dance is *pholay molay* (Dance of the Noblemen and the Ladies) which was composed based on the biography of King Norzang, a mythical king in Buddhist literature.

Gar cham in Bhutan can be best understood as *tsun cham* (mask dance of monks) and *boe cham* (mask dance of laity).

2.1.1.1. Dances of the Monks

Tsun cham literally means dances of the monks. The dances of the monks are usually performed in accordance with the rhythm/lyrics of the chanting of ritual prayers. The cham performed by the monks cannot be performed by laymen but the cham performed by laymen can be performed by monks if the situation demands. The monks performing *tsun cham* should be fully ordained monks, but those performing *boe cham* need only take the vows for that particular day. The dances that are performed by the monks are:

2.1.1.1.1. Black Hat Drum Dance (Zhana Nga Cham)

Poisonous and infectious afflictions can obstruct accomplishment in Buddhism. To overcome them, the Masters of the Vajrayana tradition use skilful means. The dancers beating their drums proclaim victory over the evil spirits. Zhana Nga Cham represents this process of good prevailing over evil. The sound of the drums represents religion and the subtle form of Buddha's teachings. Zhana Nga Cham is performed on occasions where great works are planned; one such occasion, for instance, was when the Glorious Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal consolidated the country. The elements of earth, water, fire and air, are pacified by the performance of this dance, thus making them fertile and supportive



of the initiatives. The dancers wear large black hats, felt boots and colourful long brocade garments.

2.1.1.1.2. Dance of the Terrifying Deities (Tung Ngam Cham)

It is said that Sutrayana and Vajrayana vehicles are the ultimate refuge for all sentient beings. However, there are human and non-human beings that harm or cause obstacles to the transmission of teachings, and therefore, in order to subdue these beings that do not readily submit to peaceful means, Guru Rinpoche took wrathful forms to get the better of them. This is what is depicted in the dance, Tung Ngam in which one of

the dancers represents Dorje Drago, the terrifying form Guru Rinpoche assumed to subdue enemies of the doctrine. The performers are representations of the deities of Gongdue (Embodiment of Realization). Attired in beautiful brocade robes and felt boots, they wear terrifying masks.

2.1.1.1.3. Wrathful War Dance (Ging Tsholing Cham)

This dance was introduced in the 15th century by Pema Lingpa, to whom it was revealed in a vision. When King Thrisong Detsen of Tibet was building Samye monastery in Tibet, Guru Rinpoche applied his supernatural powers and manifested in the form of Ging, representing immense positive force to combat and subdue the evil spirits that were hindering the construction of the monastery, which was an important part of establishing the teachings of the Buddha. The dance depicts Zangdo Pelri, the paradise of Guru Rinpoche. The enlightened sages of India and Tibet are seated in a row on his right and the scholars are seated on his left. In the intermediate areas are the 108 treasure discoverers who are his incarnations and his 25 disciples including King Thrisong Detsen. The inner dance, called the Ging dance, is performed by an assembly of spiritual heroes, deities and dakinis in their peaceful and wrathful forms. The outer dance called Tsholing is performed by the the Tsholings, terrifying deities seen as protectors of the religion. After they have destroyed the evil spirits symbolised by an effigy in a black box they are chased away by the Ging, who then perform a victory dance while beating their drums. The Tsholing dancers wear long colourful dresses and terrifying masks, while the Ging dancers wear imitation tiger skins and terrifying masks with a flag on the top and carry drums in their left hands and drumsticks in their right. This dance symbolises the victory of good over evil.





2.1.1.1.4. Dance of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche (Guru Tshengye)

Guru Rinpoche is a highly realized being who took many miraculous forms in order to benefit the world in general and the region of Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan in particular. In the dance of Guru Tshengye, he took the following forms:

1. *Guru Tshokye Dorji*: When Guru Rinpoche miraculously took birth from the lake Dhanakosha and became the son of King Indra Bodhi; he came to be known by this name.
2. *Guru Shakya Singye*: When Guru Rinpoche left the pleasures of the palace to seek the path of Dharma in the cave of Maratika, he was known by this name.
3. *Guru Loden Chogsed*: When Guru Rinpoche had mastered all the instructions of the Sutras and Tantras in the sacred places of India, he was known by this name.
4. *Guru Pema Sambhava*: When Guru Rinpoche took the mystical consort *Lhacham Mendarava*, her father, the King of Zahor took offence and set him on fire. However, the fire miraculously turned into a lake of lotuses. Due to this feat, Guru Rinpoche was known by this name.
5. *Guru Pema Gyalpo*: When Guru Rinpoche returned to the domain of Ogyen, the evil ministers tried to kill him along with his parents. However, they were defeated and subsequently converted to Buddhism.

Guru Rinpoche was known by this name as a mark of accomplishing this feat.

6. *Guru Nima Oezer*: When Guru Rinpoche wandered through the eight great charnel grounds including the legendary *Sewa Tshal*, giving teachings to dakinis and taming the evil forces, he was known by this name.
7. *Guru Singye Dradrog*: When Guru Rinpoche prevailed over forces opposed to the Dharma in the centre of the world, Bodh Gaya, by accomplishing miraculous feats, he was known by this name.
8. *Guru Dorje Drola*: When Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress from Singye Dzong in Kurtog to Tagtshang in Paro, concealing sacred objects and prevailing over evil forces, he was known by this name.

2.1.1.1.5. Dance of the Sixteen Wisdom Consorts (Rigma Chudrug)

When the demonstrations of the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche have been completed, all sit in order alongside Guru Rinpoche. Then the dance of the wisdom consorts (that is, dakinis) takes place. During this dance 16 dakinis, representing different aspects of the four classes of dakinis (i.e. each class has four different aspects) sing and perform two dances in front of the Guru and his various manifestations. Therefore, the *Rigma chudrug cham* is a representation of the offerings made by these dakinis. The dancers wear long brocade dresses with aprons of carved bone ornaments. They dance unmasked, wearing elaborate headdresses,



first holding drums, then small hand bells and hand drums.

While the dakinis are dancing, the onlookers come forward to pass in front of the Guru and his manifestations and receive blessings. People who witness this performance with deep faith, as if they are in the midst of the real dakinis rather than their representations, are believed to be guaranteed instant enlightenment. After completing their dance, the dakinis lead the whole entourage out.

2.1.1.2. Dances of the Courtiers (Boe Cham)

These dances performed by laymen are called *Boe Cham*. In the past, they were performed by men enrolled in the cadre of all-purpose attendants known as *boe garpas*. In earlier times, Boe Cham were performed in the dzongs, temples, and monasteries and during religious festivals, but during the reign of the third king they began to be performed outside the religious festivals. Boe cham dances are no longer performed by garpas, but by other laymen. The chams performed by laymen are:

2.1.1.2.1. Dance of the Four Stags

This dance called *sha zam cham* was revealed in the 8th century by the first Namkhai Nyingpo and is a re-enactment of an auspicious incident in the life of Guru Rinpoche. The dance refers to a contest in which Guru Rinpoche subdued the King of the Wind, Sabdag, who was the ruler of the earth spirits and had been causing much trouble and unhappiness amongst the people of those times. As a mark of this achievement, Guru

Rinpoche went around the world riding on a great stag that had been Sabdag's mount to restore peace and happiness. As well as being a subjugation dance to ward off evil influences, the dance is seen as having a beneficial effect on those who witness its performance. The bare-chested dancers wear stag masks, cloud collars and knee length silk skirts.

2.1.1.2.2. The Three Ging Dances of Pema Lingpa

The Peling Ging Sum Cham (the three dances of ging, or emanations of Guru Rinpoche in the Pema Lingpa tradition) comprise a set of three sacred mask dances considered to have been introduced by Pema Lingpa, to whom they were revealed on a visit to Zangdo Pelri.

The Buddha's teachings (Mantras and Sutras) by which one achieves ultimate happiness for all sentient beings in the three different worlds (Khamsum) are hindered by evil spirits (*nyulema*), the non-human beings. While visiting Zangdog Pelri, Pema Lingpa witnessed how Guru Rinpoche miraculously subjugated the evil spirits by means of the three Ging dances. This was the secret teaching that Pema Lingpa received from Guru Rinpoche. On this account the Peling Ging Sum Cham is considered extremely sacred and those who witness it are said to accumulate much merit. The three dances, Jug Ging (dance holding stick), Dri Ging (dance holding sword) and Nga Ging (dance holding drum), are performed in sequence.

The most special characteristic of the Jug Ging is their ability to see and perceive the evil activities and obstructions caused by the Nyulemas in all the three worlds. Jug means baton or wand and the Jug Ging use their wands to sense the direction where evil lies. Using their psychic senses and supernatural powers, the Jug Ging capture the Nyulema, render them spiritually powerless, and then imbue them with wisdom and compassion. This is the message portrayed by the **Jug Ging** dance.

The **Dri Ging**, who carry swords, subjugate evil with their weapons. They separate the Nyulemas from their evil lords, purify their Karma, take away their power and wealth and then liberate them to celestial realms.

In the third dance, the **Nga Ging**, who each carry a drum (nga), perform a victory dance for having overcome the evil spirits, beating their drums frantically to mark their victory over evil forces and the resultant infinite spread of the Buddha's teachings.

The dance is performed during the tshechus to bring good luck and happiness to all beings and liberate them

from the world of sufferings into the Buddha realm. It is highly regarded as a treasure dance, since it emanates from treasure-revealer Pema Lingpa, and merely witnessing it during religious festivals is said to increase one's merit and help to repel evil influences. The bare-chested dancers wear cloud collars, knee-length skirts, and masks. In the first part of the dance they carry sticks, in the second part they perform with swords, and in the third part they carry hand drums.

2.1.1.2.3. The Treasure Dance of Pema Lingpa

Prior to the consecration ceremony of Lhundrup Choeling Monastery in Bumthang, Pema Lingpa was said to have dreamt of five brothers claiming to be from the world of *Tongsum* (where beings live for three thousand years) performing a dance. They told him that he should learn this dance and perform it during the consecration ceremony for the temple. Pema Lingpa remembered the steps of the dance even after he woke up. He wrote down the steps and made his followers learn the dance. This sacred dance later came to be known as *Peling Tercham* or *tshangmai ging cham*. It is performed to ward off evil spirits, to please higher beings and spirits, and to bring everlasting peace and happiness to the people on earth. The dancers wear white serene looking masks and knee length yellow skirts. Each carries a little bell and drum.

2.1.1.2.4. The Dance of the Stag and Hounds

The birth of the *Shawo Shachi Cham* dates back to the 11th century when Jetsun Milarepa, the great yogi from Tibet, converted Gonpo Dorji, a fierce hunter, into a follower of the Dharma. The dance is usually performed over two days, on the first and second days of a tshechu. The first part incorporates a lot of joking and humour

as the hunter makes preparations for a good luck ritual to be performed prior to his hunt. The moral of the story is revealed in the second part, where the events take place at Milarepa's hermitage.

The essential story goes as follows: While Milarepa is meditating in a cave known as Katya in Nyishangkurta (on the present day border between the Tibetan autonomous region of China and Nepal), he hears hounds barking somewhere outside. In a short while, a stag glistening with sweat bounds into the cave and looks towards Milarepa as if to seek his protection. Milarepa sings a song to calm the terrified stag, which then peacefully lies down on the right of the great yogi.

Soon afterwards, two ferocious red hounds come rushing inside the cave in hot pursuit of the stag. Milarepa also calms them by singing a song and the stag and the hounds lie side by side near Milarepa. The merciless hunter known as Gonpo Dorje soon arrives in pursuit of his hounds, and steps into the cave armed with his bow and arrows. The sight of his hounds and the stag sitting peacefully together beside Milarepa infuriates the hunter, for he thinks that the great yogi has used some kind of black magic on the animals. He shoots an arrow at Milarepa but the arrow slips from his bowstring.

Milarepa then sings the hunter a song to calm his mind and open it to the Dharma, but the hunter remains uncertain whether Milarepa is a saint or else a practitioner of black magic. Gonpo Dorje inspects Milarepa's cave, and upon seeing nothing in it but an empty bowl is surprised. He is overwhelmed by feelings of profound respect for Milarepa, feels deep remorse for all his past sinful actions and vows never to commit such acts again.



Gonpo Dorje becomes an ardent follower of Buddhism. In his next life, he is reborn as the mind reincarnation of Milarepa's disciple, Khilarepa. The Shawa Shachi Cham basically reveals that a person like Gonpo Dorje can also attain enlightenment if he relinquishes his sinful life and practices the Dharma.

2.1.1.2.5. The Guitar Dance

Although referred to in English by this name, the stringed instrument is in fact a lute, not a guitar. *Dranyen Cham* was introduced to rejoice in the peaceful and happy state of the country and to celebrate the founding of the Drukpa Kagyud School of Buddhism in Bhutan by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who unified the country under his benevolent rule by defeating both internal and external enemies. The Zhabdrung, recognised as an incarnation of both Avalokiteshvara and Guru Rinpoche, taught people to place their faith in the triple gem (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), and gave Bhutan a distinct cultural identity. He blessed the people and brought peace and prosperity to the country.

The dancers wear heavy woollen dress (traditional felt boots, long black skirt, yellow shirt and brown coat), a sword across the waist and a headband. One dancer holds a traditional Bhutanese seven-stringed lute, called a *dranyen*, and plays this to keep time for the dancers.

2.1.1.2.6. The Dance of the Noblemen and Ladies

This dance is a kind of play with much lewd joking and clowning to entertain the onlookers. The literal meaning of *Pholay Molay* is noble men and noble ladies. Other characters include *atsaras* (clowns), an old man and an old woman and 16 attendants. The story goes like this: Once there lived a king called Norzang in the Kingdom of Ngaden in Northern India. The king had 500 hundred queens of which one (*Yidrogma*) had been presented to him by a hunter's son. The son of the hunter had acquired the queen as a reward from the serpent spirit for saving his life, and subsequently offered her to his king. King Norzang fell in love with this queen which made the other queens jealous.

In the dance, the other queens conspire to kill her. To fulfil their mission, they seek the help of the court priest, Hari, who performs black magic on the father of the king. The king's father has a very bad dream. He consults the court priest who, with his bad motives, tells the king that the kingdom would soon be invaded from the north if they didn't start the war first. The king's father, fearing to lose his kingdom, sends his son Norzang at the head of the army.



King Norzang and his beautiful wife had to part, which was the intention of the cruel queens and the court priest. King Norzang leaves a white scarf and his ring with his wife so that she can always remember him. The king goes to the battle field accompanied by the protectors of faith, guardian deities and tutelary deities. At the end the king emerges victorious.

The king returns from the battle field in victory since the enemies are not aware of the fake prophecy of the court priest. He returns home to find that his beautiful wife has disappeared. In the absence of the king the cruel queens and the priest tried to kill her, but since she was a *dakini*, she flew away to heaven. The king brings the



queen back to earth and after settling scores with the people who tried to harm them, the king and his dakini queen lived happily thereafter.

The Kay cham (accompaniment dance by the courtiers) illustrates how the king is helped by the deities and protective spirits in the battle. The drama also shows cutting off of a nose to show how conflicts can occur even between husband and wives who love each other so dearly. It is to show that surrendering yourself to the temptations of the world brings unhappiness and sufferings in life. Seeking refuge in the triple gem can only bring happiness. The moral of the story relates to the Buddhist doctrine of universal law which says that there is no real essence in worldly things.

In a cruder popular interpretation, this is a dance about two princesses left with an old couple by two princes when they go to war. The princesses and the old woman are led astray by some *atsaras*. When the princes return they are very angry and cut off the women's noses in punishment. Finally, everyone is reconciled and the princes and princesses get married.

The main characters in the dance drama wear white masks, rich costumes and jewellery and felt boots. The old man and woman are dressed according to their station in life; the 16 kay cham mask dancers wear silk skirts and each carries a sword in his right hand.

2.1.1.2.7. The Drum Dance of Drametse

Drametse Ngacham is the most popular mask dance performed throughout Bhutan during festivals held in honour of Guru Rinpoche. There are several versions of how the dance was first introduced, but it is commonly thought that the dance was first introduced by Khedrup Kuenga Gyeltshen in Ogyen Thechog Choling monastery in the 16th century. (Many believe this sage to be a brother of Pema Lingpa's granddaughter, Ani Choeten Zangmo who settled in Drametse after naming the place.) It is believed that while he was on meditative retreat, through his intense powers of concentration Khedrup Kuenga Gyeltshen was able to visit the celestial palace of Zangdog Pelri, where he witnessed the heavenly attendants of Guru Rinpoche transform themselves into one hundred wrathful and peaceful deities and perform a dance using drums and drumsticks. From this vision Khedrup Kuenga Gyeltshen understood that Guru Rinpoche wanted him to use this medium of dance to help sentient beings defeat the cycle of birth and rebirth. He carefully noted down the choreography of the dance and introduced it in Drametse.



The dance is performed by sixteen male dancers wearing knee length yellow skirts and masks of different animals and birds and the twelve animals of the Bhutanese horoscope. The dancers carry a large hand drum in the left hand and a drumstick in the right. It is performed in two sequences, a calm version and a wrathful one. By witnessing the dance, one becomes familiar with the appearance of the animals which are supposed to meet us in the intermediate state after death. The significance of Drametse Ngacham is manifold: its performance helps the Mahayana teachings to flourish, brings peace to sentient beings, prevents calamities and internal strife, and brings good fortune to the country.

In 2005 UNESCO proclaimed Drametse Ngacham as a Masterpiece of the World Intangible Heritage.

2.1.1.2.8. Dance of the Lords of the Cremation Grounds

Durthroe Dagmo Chezi Cham commonly known as *Durdag Cham* or just *Durdag*, depicts how a person who believes in religion and desires the spread of religious teachings is lead to a higher state of life through single-mindedly passing along the white path. It is believed that the lords of the cremation grounds take vows to protect the Dharma teaching and its practitioners. They guard the Mandalas of the Tantric







Deities and unwaveringly protect them by making the evil forces powerless or else by destroying them. Those spirits that are not destroyed are then offered to the higher deities. The four dancers wear white short skirts, white gloves, white boots and white skull masks. By witnessing the cham one can be reminded of the need to believe in religion and practise the Dharma.

2.1.1.2.9. Dance of the Judgement of the Dead

The *Raksha Mangcham* is a spectacular dance introduced by the highly revered treasure revealer Tertoen Karma Lingpa. The dance is based on the Bardo Thodrol (Book of the Dead), a text which was hidden in a cave by Guru Rinpoche and then rediscovered in the 14th century by Karma Lingpa. The dance is closely associated with the soul of a person after death. When a person dies, his/her soul is believed to enter an intermediate state, or bardo, which is between death and rebirth. In that stage, the Buddha appears in a multitude of both peaceful and wrathful forms to guide and liberate the confused soul to eternal peace. It is said that these appearances of the Buddha are recognised as one's saviours by those who believed in the Triple Gem while living as human beings in the earthly world. A person who did not believe in the Triple Gem, on the other hand, would find the appearances frightening and tend to run away from them, not recognising that they are manifestations of the Buddha, because that person is blinded by the ill-deeds performed during his/her life before death.

The whole dance is a theatrical show in a court of justice. However, one should always remember that the individual characters are all manifestations of the one Buddha. The Lord of Death plays the supreme role of passing judgment according to one's deeds. The most trusted *Raksha Lango* (Ox headed dancer) is the Minister of Justice who strictly follows the principles of cause and effect relationship of the good and bad deeds. The loyal *Phag Gochen* (Wild hog headed dancer) maintains the records of sinful and meritorious deeds of all beings. The *Chung Gochen* (Garuda headed dancer) clutches a hammer in one hand, representing the destruction of evil, while its other hand holds a crooked sword symbolizing the dispelling of the three poisons of ignorance. The *Singye Gochen* (lion-headed dancer) holds an iron chain in one hand which symbolizes the bond of love, and a noose in the other hand representing mercy. *Domgyi Gochen* is a bear-headed dancer who carries a sword in one hand and a gut noose in the other to show the need to eliminate selfishness and cultivate wisdom. *Drulgyi*



Gochen (snake-headed dancer) holds in his hand a mirror of fate in which the images of both sinful and virtuous deeds of a person are reflected. *Trelgyi Gochen* (monkey-headed dancer) carries a balance scale to weigh sins against virtues.

When closely observed, this dance of the intermediate state is easy to follow. One can see how judgments are passed by the Lord of Death on *Digchen Nyalwabum*, a sinner and on *Khimdag Palkyed*, a virtuous householder.



2.1.1.2.10. Dance of the Heroes

Pa Cham was introduced in the 15th century by Tertoen Pema Lingpa. While in a mystic state, he had travelled to Zangdog Pelri (the copper-coloured mountain, abode of Guru Rinpoche) and had seen the Guru Rinpoche there, seated in the centre of a limitless mandala of rainbows and surrounded by an assembly of sages, heroes and heroines (i.e. dakas and dakinis, spiritual, non-human beings) and tutelary deities, dancing in the forms of the emanations of both peaceful and terrifying deities and singing harmoniously together. Pema Lingpa introduced this dance so as to lead those who witness it into the presence of Guru Rinpoche. *Pa Cham* is the dance performed in a peaceful form for the benefit of sentient beings.

The dancers do not have masks. They wear knee-length yellow skirts and on their heads they wear golden, five-pointed crowns, on each of the five faces of which is represented one of the five meditational Buddha families of tantric Buddhism. Long strands of black thread hang below the crowns, as the dancers are representing long-haired dakinis. They perform the dance barefoot. Each carries a small bell and a small drum.

2.1.1.2.11. The Religious Dance

Choe zhey is a dance in honour of Drogoen (protector of beings) Tsangpa Gyare, the 12th century founder of the Drukpa Kagyud tradition, who opened for pilgrimage the access to Tsari Mountain, one of the three most important sacred mountains of Tibet. The deity residing at Yu Tsho (Turquoise Lake) was obstructing the pilgrims from visiting Tsari, a journey they wished to undertake to accrue merit for both their present and future lives. When the deity transformed itself into a



frog as strong as a yak and tried to obstruct Tsangpa Gyare from going any further, without any hesitation he leapt onto the frog's back, crushed it and turned it into a boulder. Thus, the deity was overpowered and then converted into the guardian deity of the sacred place. The *Choe zhey* commemorates Tsangpa Gyare's victory over this deity. The dancers wear elaborate and heavy woollen attire and a special head-gear, a wreath-like coiled headband of red, yellow, green, blue and white stripes, which symbolises that the dancer is not an ordinary person but one who has attained mystic powers. The lead dancer wears a brown jacket. This dance normally marks the formal end of a festival and is performed just before the *Trashie Lebi* or farewell dance.

2.1.1.3. Regional Mask Dances

Different lamas and spiritual masters established their monastic seats in different places. They also composed different dances which are now displayed to the public at particular times and on auspicious days. The following are mask dances performed in different regions of the country.

2.1.1.3.1. The Deity Dance of Sumthrang

Tsen Cham, the mask dance of the mountain deity of Sumthrang Choedzong in Ura valley, Bumthang, is a unique dance dating back to the 15th century. It is also known by different names such as *Lha cham* (dance of the gods), and *Ta cham* (horse dance). *Tsen Cham* was first introduced by the 23rd Nyorab Jamyang Drakpa Oedzer, who belonged to the Sumthrang *choejay* (religious lineage). In those days it was customary for the Sumthrang *choejay* (head of the lineage) to visit Lhodrak and Pethang in Tibet, and also Sikkim. When he realized that he was gaining popularity that could be

a hindrance in establishing collective merit, he decided to leave for meditation at the sacred mountain of Tsari in Tibet. At that time *Drak Tsen* (deity of the cliff) Dorje Dradul (Indestructible Conqueror of Enemies) appeared and performed a mask dance requesting the lama to remain at Sumthrang. Dorje Dradul of Sumthrang had been subjugated by Guru Rinpoche and converted into a protective deity of this holy place to guard the Buddha Dharma. The Choejay was so inspired that he taught the same dance to his disciples and it later became a tradition at the Sumthrang Samdrup Choedzong. This dance was further introduced in the monasteries of his disciples and patrons in the Kurtoe and Kheng regions. The Sumthrang Tsen Cham is now one of the main mask dances performed during the annual festival held at the 13th century Sumthrang Samdrup Choedzong monastery in the ninth lunar month each year.

2.1.1.3.2. Dance of the Five Sisters of Long Life

Tshering che nga is the dance of Tsheringma and her four sisters, the protective deities of Beting Monastery near Ura in Bumthang.

In the 12th century Jetsun Milarepa became popular for his powers of healing and for helping people attain enlightenment. The five dakinis wanted to test Milarepa's level of meditation. They did everything possible to distract Milarepa, but failed. Convinced by his level of attainment, the dakinis decided to become his followers and served him with great devotion. They performed the *tshering che nga* dance for him, and this dance is still performed by the people of Ura at their annual winter festival held in the first month of the lunar year, as a mark of their devotion to Tshering Che Nga.

2.1.1.3.3. The Pig Dance of Tamzhing

Phag Cham was composed in the 15th century. At that time Tertoen Pema Lingpa was looking for a suitable place to build a monastery according to a prophesy he had received in a vision. A pig miraculously indicated the place at what is now known as Tamzhing, where there was a patch of level ground appropriate for the construction of the monastery. To mark this auspicious occasion, Pema Lingpa introduced the pig dance as the first item in the series of mask dances mounted during the consecration ceremony of the monastery, formally known as Tamzhing Lhundrup Choling or Temple of the Good Message. The performance of the pig dance continues to this day at the annual Tamzhing Phala Chodpa (Tamzhing Festival of the Boar or Pig) held in the 8th lunar month.

2.1.1.3.4. Thangbi Ber Cham

This *ter cham* (treasure dance) is a sacred dance to commemorate the acknowledgement of the protection received from *Bernag*, the local deity of Tsurphu in Tibet. When the second Karmapa, Gyalwa Karma Pagshi Rinpoche (1204–1283), was held captive by the Chinese king during the 13th century, Bernag pretended to be in a deep sleep and refused to wake up despite several calls from Karmapa for his help. But when Bhutan's protective deity, Palden Lhamo, added her plea that he should render help, he immediately woke up and without delay set off for China. As he had left in haste he was not even dressed properly. Reaching his destination, he thrust his knife into the ground near the king's palace, and threatened to destroy it. Frightened and intimidated, the king responded by releasing Gyalwa Karmapa and asked for forgiveness for his wrong deeds.

The fourth Zhamar Rinpoche of the Karmapa School came to Bumthang from Tibet in the 15th century, bringing with him this *ter cham* (treasure mask dance) tradition from Tsurphu, where the dance used to be performed annually. In 1470 he built a sacred monastery in Thangbi in honour of the protective deity and blessed the place. After founding Thangbi Gomba he introduced the dance there. Hence, this *ter cham* is as highly regarded in Bumthang as it was in Tibet.

2.1.1.3.5. The Lion Dance of Jampa Lhakhang

Singye Cham literally means lion dance. It is said that the *Jowo Jampa* (Maitreya Buddha statue from which the present name of the temple is derived) was brought from Lhasa to Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang on the back of a snow lion, arriving on the 15th day of the 9th month. Upon reaching the lhakhang, the Jowo spoke and said that a *tshechu* should be observed there every year on that particular day. Since then the lion dance has been performed every year during the Jampa Lhakhang *Tshechu*.

2.1.1.3.6. Dekiling Ter Cham

Dekiling ter cham is performed once every three years on the 17th day of the 4th month of the lunar calendar. It is held at Choechong pang (dharma protector ground) in front of Dekiling Goenpa starting at 6 p.m. and ending at midnight. (The Goenpa is in Nindukha village which falls under Kana geog in Dagana, and is about 20 minutes' drive from the road point now.) All local people, with the exception of children below the age of six, the disabled or handicapped, the elderly and/or frail and those who are sick are obliged to attend the performance of the treasure dance.

All the men in the community are supposed to gather naked in a row encircling a bonfire made by the women. Even male outsiders visiting from elsewhere are expected to abide by this customary practice of the community. The hosts of male guests who fail to participate in the *ter cham*, must pay a fine of one *zom* (barrel) of alcohol or grain. The women are expected to witness the show to judge the size of the men's penises. The size of the piece of meat given to the men later is in proportion to the size of their respective sexual organs.

This naked dance is performed in the belief that the act will ward off evils and misfortunes brought by *kharam* (malicious talk). Every household, especially in the rural villages, would at least have either a phallus painted on the outer walls of the house or a phallus post (*kharam shing*) erected at the entrance door or gate.

The men all gather at Dekiling Goenpa and at 6 p.m. start moving from there to a nearby place called Zingkhar (water pool), where they take off their clothes. On returning to Dekiling Goenpa they get the blessing from the protective deities there, and then they go from house to house around the village in their newly naked state. At each house visited, the woman of the house must offer tea and alcohol to the men. After the last house has been visited they again gather at a place called Lunsigang (windy hillock) and do *bey* which literally means brandishing a sword. From there, they return to Choechong pang where the bonfire has been lit and gather around it for the *cham*. They perform a dance around the fire wearing only *changkhu* (wreaths made from a shrub locally known as *kema* (i.e. rhododendron cinnabarinum) on their heads. They do not wear masks.

2.1.1.3.7. The Yak Dance of Tang

The *yak cham* of Tang is held in honour of Guru Rinpoche's treasure guardian, Rinchen Goenyak who is also the cattle deity. The upper Tang valley is considered

to be the territory of this deity, who appears in the form of a yak. The yak dance is one of highlights of the festival popularly known as Namkha Rabney (consecration ceremony) held on the 9th to the 11th of the 10th lunar month to commemorate the founding of Namkha Lhakhang. Yak *cham* is performed on the third day to pay respect to Rinchen Goenyak and bring peace and harmony to the valley.

2.1.1.3.8. The Yak Dance of Shingkar

The *Shingkar yak cham* is performed for the public during the Shingkar Rabney festival which is held annually over five days from the 15th day of the 10th lunar month, at Dechenling Lhakhang in Shingkar. A *choe yak* (sacred yak) is believed to have appeared from a lake at Chuling Singma. It is believed that some local deities transform themselves into animals to show their presence, so following its extraordinary emergence from the lake, Choe Yak was regarded as the protective deity of the region. Thus, the yak dance of Shingkar is performed every year to appease this protective deity.

2.1.1.3.9. The Yak Dance of Merak and Sakteng

The Yak Dance of Merak and Sakteng is performed during annual festivals of the Merak and Sakteng communities. There are two versions for the origin of this yak dance. In one version, it is said to be an enactment of the legendary tale of Thoepa Gali, who is venerated by some as the God of Livestock, while the other version says the dance is performed to pay due respect to the yak as the principal means of livelihood for the community. Both versions are acceptable as the mask dancers represent both Thoepa Gali and also the nomadic life of the community. Yak *cham* are performed in other parts of the country, but either as the manifestation of great masters or tutelary deities trying to confront the evil forces or else to appease deities, whereas the Yak Cham



of Merak and Sakteng is performed to honour the yaks who give the community food, shelter and clothing. It is to show the community's respect for the yaks. The songs in the series of episodes during the performance of the yak dance provide description of life of nomads. However, most people believe that it is based on the legendary tale of Thoepe Gali.

2.1.1.3.10. The Dance of Sister Lhamo

Achey Lhamo dance means the Dance of Sister Lhamo. It is an enactment of a story derived from King Norzang's biography. The supreme god in heaven had a daughter called Yithro Lhamo who married a king called Norzang on earth as had been foretold. King Norzang had five hundred wives including Yidrogma who was an extraordinarily beautiful and kind-hearted queen. The other queens became jealous of her and decided to kill both her and the king. The dance depicts the failure of the queens' attempt to kill them both through first sending the king to war and then trying to devour the heart of Yidrogma in his absence. However, both King Norzang and Yidrogma overcame these evil plans and lived to rule the kingdom in peace and prosperity.

It is believed that King Norzang was a reincarnation of the Buddha, and had come to spread the teachings to sentient beings and to liberate them from their deluded acts. Thus the *Achey Lhamo* dance is performed annually so that the people witnessing it may be liberated from their sufferings.



2.1.2. The Folk Dance

Zhabthra is a performance combining *lu*, *gar* and *dro*. As already noted, *lu* means song, and *gar* means bodily movement in an artistic manner. *Dro* (or *bro*) means footsteps. The last two collectively result in the display of 'chagya' (movement of hand and gesture, footsteps) in accordance with the tune of the song.

The expression of feelings through song seems to be as old as human existence itself. Songs of an overtly religious nature are believed to have been introduced in Bhutan by Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century when he came to Bumthang and bestowed his blessings there. Much later, in the 15th century, Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo is believed to have introduced songs and dances, also formalising these into *zhaerig chusum* (the thirteen classes of songs and dances). With the coming of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the 16th century many other forms of songs and dances followed. Songs of Bhutan are based on compositions which praise the celestial beings and their human manifestations such as saintly monks and benevolent kings, and their abodes, including both man-made and natural wonders. Our traditional dances play an important role in the religious and social life of the Bhutanese people.

There are three types of dances in Bhutan namely *zhungdra*, *boedra*, and *rigsar*: as described below:

2.1.2.1. The Archetypal Bhutanese Song and Dance

The genre of *zhungdra* songs and dances represents the indigenous Bhutanese performing arts. The literal meaning of *zhungdra*, is 'the voice of the centre' and is typically characterized by highly glorified verses sung to a long and meandering melody. The women who sing the verses stand in a straight line with their hands joined together and face the main guest(s) of the occasion, the first of whom was the glorious Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. One of the most popular *zhungdra* is the archetypal *Drukgi Puna Dechen*, eulogising Punthang Dechen Phodrang (the Palace of Great Bliss), the grand fortress of Punakha where the formation of the Land of the Thunder Dragon was proclaimed to the world.

Punthang Dechen of Druk Yul

Resembles Trashi Gomang (Auspicious Many-doored Stupa)

Like a beautiful peacock resting on the ground

Is like a strong foundation



*Looks like a beautiful peacock resting on the ground.
From Thangdzong, Punakha Dzong towers above,
Its windows shining like silvery white mirrors
The bridge of Pungthang Dzong
Is like a gold and silver bridge
The footpath with flags on both sides
Is like a path of white silken scarf leading to heaven
Resembles a beautiful peacock resting on the ground.*

2.1.2.2. The Songs of the Courtiers

Boedra is of more recent origin. The courtiers were called *boe garpa* and those with talents performed dances for the monarch and his family. Though the versified compositions are the same as *zhungdra*, with identical themes of praise and adulation, the melodies and dances are livelier. Boedra literally means 'the voice of courtiers' and this song and dance tradition was popular in the court of the third king. Musical instruments like *dranyen* (seven-stringed lute), *chiwang* (two-stringed fiddle), *lingm* (six-holed flute) and *yangchen* (dulcimer) are played to accompany the songs and dances of the well-dressed male performers.

The best example of boedra is perhaps the song that praises the intent and purpose of the reconstruction of Trashi Choedzong ('Fortress of the Glorious Religion') in Thimphu. Known as the father of modern Bhutan, the third king of Bhutan was a man of action and vision, both initiating the process of bringing a traditional society into the modern age and at the same time placing great emphasis on the need to preserve those aspects of the traditional culture that gave Bhutan its unique identity. Among his many achievements was the

reconstruction of Trashi Choedzong into a modern seat of government. The boedra is as follows:

*Trashi Choedzong, the massive dzong
Is the capital of Bhutan;
The independent country [of Bhutan]
May it be auspicious!
The independent country [of Bhutan]
May it be prosperous!
The one sitting on the right is
H.H. the Je Khenpo, the supreme religious head
Through the state of his exalted (unbiased) mind
Through the condition of his perfected/ impartial
mind
May the Dharma be spread widely!
The one sitting on the left is
The Chief of Armed Forces;
Through the state of his wrathful mind*



May the external enemies be vanquished!

The one sitting in the middle is

His Majesty the King, the religious and secular head;

Through the state of his compassionate mind

May his subjects be led to prosperity!

2.1.2.3. Rigsar — the Contemporary Genre

The most recent, and perhaps the most prolific, among all song types is the *Rigsar*. Literally meaning ‘the contemporary genre,’ or ‘new idea’ rigsar dates back to the 1960s. While the traditional songs are highly formal, rigsar is more personalized and allows for expressions of emotions, for example in love songs, most of which are outside the matters of faith. This genre has more latitude in its composition and singing style, and therefore allows greater freedom to the artist. The popularity of this genre is growing these days as it fits in well with the changing forms of artistic expression in modern Bhutan and is an important component of the commercial film industry. However, some compositions, like their predecessors, are hymns and praises to the saints, kings and the country. A good example of rigsar is ‘*Miwang Nga Da Gyalpo*’ composed in praise of the fifth king on the occasion of his marriage in 2011 and sung by popular rigsar singer, Namgay Jigs:

His Majesty the King, the People’s King

Ascending the golden throne is the luck of the people of Bhutan

The karmic connection of previous lives has brought us together like parents and brothers and sisters.

Our gathering together today will never be forgotten

May the Blessings of the Triple Gem grace the people of Bhutan with the eternal reign of the Wangchuck Dynasty

Like the never diminishing rays of the Sun;

His Majesty the Fifth King

The monarch of the glorious dragon country

Ascending the golden throne is the fortune of the people of Bhutan;

We, the people of Bhutan, come together like parents and brothers and sisters

Work together to develop the glorious dragon country;

May the Blessings of the Triple Gem grace the people of Bhutan with the eternal reign of the Wangchuck Dynasty

Like the never diminishing rays of the Sun.

2.1.3. The Dances of Heroes and Warriors

2.1.3.1. The Dances of Folk Heroes

Zhey literally meaning ‘dance’ is a traditional folk dance, having specific affiliation to Bhutan. There are zheys connected to the four districts in Bhutan: Paro (Wuchu-bi Zhey), Thimphu (Wang Zhey), Gasa (Goen Zhey), and Trongsa (Nub Zhey). Though the basic theme and significance of the zhey in all the four districts is more or less same, there are subtle variations among them such as dress code, and the steps and movements of the dance. This folk dance is performed only by menfolk, on special occasions like traditional ceremonies and tshechu.

This genre of folk dance is typically performed by a group of men singing and dancing simultaneously, and it often requires rigorous movements and rapid rhythm. While performing, the dancers tread firmly, gradually intensifying the pace of their steps. This genre of folk dance has a specific number of steps, with a specific dedication for each step.

Goen Zhey

Goen Zhey is performed by people of Goen, in Gasa district. This dance is the oldest of the genre and was first performed in a place named Bangdekharas as a way of receiving Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal when he first arrived in Bhutan. The following stanzas describe the arrival of Zhabdrung, escorted by Lam Namgye of Obtsho. These are significant verses.

From the east, there always rises a sun; but the sun that rises today is much warmer.

From Tibet, lamas have always come; but the lama who comes today brings more blessings.

The dance is today performed by twenty one dancers (comprising one lead dancer and twenty other dancers) during Gasa Tshechu. The lead dancer wears a *chamok* (helmet) and colourful silk scarf, while other dancers wear a *kopak* (headband) and a plain white scarf. Each dancer wears a red woollen *gho* (robe), black *tego* (undershirt), *yuelham* (traditional boots), and a *pata* (sword). It is said that the costumes for the Goen Zhey are similar to battle gear worn by warriors during troubled times in the past.



The Goen Zhey has thirteen steps, each with a specific dedication, as follows:

- Step one: *Sa-chak*, dedicated to the initiation.
- Step two: *Chak-tshelma*, dedicated to commemorate spiritual teachers, deities and ancestors.
- Step three: *Shar-pharley-thridu*, dedicated to guests of the occasion.
- Step four: *Tshopa-namyang-tshok*, dedicated to the gathering.
- Step five: *Norbu-dungkar*, acknowledging preciousness of conch in Buddhism.
- Step six: *Tsel-sum-pa*, dedicated to the three powerful forces: sky, sun, and rays.
- Step seven: *Zhuk-drel*, dedicated to the excellence of the assembly line.
- Step eight: *Pa-tsba*, dedicated to the usefulness of cane.
- Step nine: *Chamshok*, dedicated to the dance itself.
- Step ten: *Jachen-ngangpa*, dedicated to the giant swan.
- Step eleven: *Meto-kumud*, offering of lotus and water to the deities.
- Step twelve: *Thridu-nyima-jugjug*, dedicated to the wellbeing of the spiritual teachers, deities and ancestors.
- Step thirteen: *Chaluk-lekchi-chaluk-lek*, concluding prayer.

Wang Zhey

Wang Zhey has its origin in the Thimphu valley. In the 17th century, when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal first arrived in the Thimphu valley, his followers in the district performed this zhey as a mark of their devotion. The dancers are bare-headed. Each wears a raw silk gho, signifying the sovereignty and independence of the country, over which is wrapped a patterned silk *mevo* (knee-length skirt), signifying protection against adverse influences. Each dancer carries a white scarf (*kabney*) as a sign of respect and allegiance to the Lama (i.e. the Zhabdrung). The dancers wear *draltham* (traditional leather and silk boot) to subdue the country's enemies. Each dancer wears a five-coloured headband made of silk signifying the spread of the Lama's blessing to all mankind. *Wang Zhey* is performed by a lead dancer with twelve assistant dancers. Today, *Wang Zhey* is performed during *tshechu* and *tendrel* (special official occasions).

Wang Zhey has fourteen steps, with a specific dedication to each step.

- Step one: *Chatselma*, obeisance to lamas and leaders.
- Step two: *Sa-chagi*, the initiation.
- Step three: *Zhuk-drelserdeng yoyo*, dedicated to the fineness of the assembly line.
- Step four: *Yagi-gungying-demolu*, dedicated to the gathering's wellbeing.
- Step five: *Sa-norbu-dungkar-yekhyil*, preciousness of conch in Buddhism.
- Step six: *Sa-nagtoe-takmo-jukjuk*, freedom of tiger.
- Step seven: *Boegi-jachen-ngangpa*, freedom of swan.
- Step eight: *Yesu-yeley-wongmi*, offering of water to the Buddha.
- Step nine: *Sa-boegi-yarlung-tshokha*, dedicated to Yalung Lake in Tibet.



Step ten: *Sa-meley-kepi-patsha-dang-lungkey*, dedicated to the usefulness of cane.

Step eleven: *Lhasa-jow-gi-sertok*, dedicated to the Buddha at Lhasa Jowo temple in Tibet.

Step twelve: *Zambuling-la-sung-jurwa*, dedicated to the worthy belongings of the world.

Step thirteen: *Rigo-inchi-menchi*, dedicated to the meditator and his abode.

Step fourteen: *Trashi-trashi-zerwa*, dedicated to the wellbeing and blessing to all sentient beings.

Nub Zhey

Nub Zhey originated in Trongsa district in central Bhutan. Originally, this folk dance was performed in a village called Jee located in the Nubi Gewog of Trongsa District, as a ritual performance to local deities. Nub indicates a specific community that speaks a dialect called Zha ked similar to Bumthangkha and the people of Jee village speak this dialect. That is why the zhey they perform is called Nub Zhey. It is said that the lyrics of the Nub Zhey were initially composed by a man named Aku Tempa. Later, the dance came to be performed during Trongsa Tshechu, with some modification.

The dress code of the dancers consists of a red gho, blue tego, a *khamar* kabney (white kabney with a red/white/blue stripe down either edge), *ko lham* (traditional knee-length boots) *dungkar-gi along* (conch shell finger ring), and a *thoe* (ring-like headband). The red gho signifies devotion to Buddhism; the blue tego signifies the presence of numerous medicinal herbs in the country; the *khamar* signifies the vow of adherence to the precepts; the *ko lham* signify the ability to bring all the eastern regions under control; the *dungkar-gi along* signifies victory over the invaders; and the headband signifies acknowledgement of the presence of the Lama's teachings.

The Nub Zhey has twenty two steps, each with a specific dedication.

Step one: *Chag-buel*, prostration to the teachers of Kagyud lineage.

Step two: *Choe-buel*, offering to the Lama.

Step three: *Sharley-thridu-namyang-shar*, praise to the gathering and the occasion.

Step four: *Zhey-phachi-tsoego-bey*, dedicated to the dance itself.

Step five: *Zhey-kyi thrungsä*, for the birth and origin of the dance itself.

Step six: *Zhey-gochi-chigobey*, opening the door of the dance.

Step seven: *Choe-zhuwa*, dedicated to teachings of the Lama.

Step eight: *Karza-tsibi-nyinzang*, acknowledging the sacredness and auspiciousness of the occasion.

Step nine: *Lhocho-norbui-ling*, dedicated to the lamas and leaders of Trongsa.

Step ten: *Yuegi-riwo-chograp*, dedicated to the king and his palace in Trongsa.

Step eleven: *Nye-dakpi-zhingkhām*, dedicated to the place of origin of the Kagyud lineage.

Step twelve: *Moen-tshekhar-kewi-patsha*, acknowledging the usefulness of cane.

Step thirteen: *Kongyul-la-shar-jung*, dedicated to the village of Kong.

Step fourteen: *Meto-dema*, dedicated to the father (i.e. Aku Tempa) of this dance.

Step fifteen: *Janag-tshomo*, dedicated to a sacred lake in China.

Step sixteen: *Zhey-gi-sung*, dedicated to singing of the dance.

Step seventeen: *Thangkar-goepo*, appealing features of the vulture.

Step eighteen: *Gongtoe-toenpo-yi-phodrang*, celebrating wellbeing and prosperity.

Step nineteen: *Thashed*, acknowledging the values of weaving.

Step twenty: *Tempa-yongwa*, dedicated to the place of origin of the father of this dance.

Step twenty one: *Thola-yangpa*, prayers for wellbeing of the gathering.

Step twenty two: *Trashi*, concluding aspirations of the occasion.

Wochubi Zhey

Wochubi Zhey was introduced by the people of Wochu

village, in Paro district during the initiation ceremony of Dzongdrakha monastery. The monastery was built by Choejay Penjor, who was a son of Choejay Dawa, the reincarnation of Drupthop Goenpo Dorje, a Buddhist saint from Tibet. Drupthob Gonpo Dorje originally initiated the construction of the monastery by building a Chorten (stupa), named Karmo Gul. The monastery is located above Bonde village, on the ledge of steep cliff, overlooking the village. Later, the dance was introduced as one of the many other religious dances at Paro Tshechu. The costumes of the dancers consist of a headband (which is made of green leaves), black *tego*, *khamar*, and *yuelham* (traditional boots). The dress code is supposed to represent the physical appearance of pigeon, dwelling in the cliff above the monastery, thus, signifying a pigeon.

The Wochubi Zhey has eighteen steps, with a specific dedication:

- Step one: *Lamdroe*, dedicated to the Lama, local deities, and Chorten *Karmagoul*.
- Step two: *Shar-pheley-thridu*, dedicated to the Lama, occasion, leaders, and the gathering.
- Step three: *Aku Tempa*, dedicated to the father (Aku Tempa of Zhey).
- Step four: *Boegi-aku-tempa-nga*, Aku Tempa's expedition in Bhutan.
- Step five: *Choekhor-lhasa*, dedicated to the Lhasa Jowo temple in Tibet.
- Step six: *Boegi-beldap-zhung*, Aku Tempa's life.
- Step seven: *Dungkar-yekhyil*, acknowledging the preciousness of the conch in Buddhism.
- Step eight: *Zhakpa-thrulgi-along*, dedicated to the bonding of the people.
- Step nine: *Choe-buel*, offering of the dance to the deities, lamas and the gathering.
- Step ten: *Thowa-yekhyil*, dedicated to peace, harmony and prosperity.
- Step eleven: *Nam-khorlo-tsip-gey*, dedicated to the sacredness of the occasion.
- Step twelve: *Bumthang-choekhor-kepa*, dedicated to a courtier from Bumthang Choekhor.

Step thirteen: *Aku-tempa-mizhu*, welcoming Aku Tempa.

Step fourteen: *Lam-se-nyi-gi-zhel-jel*, commemorating Choejay Dawa and Choejay Penjor.

Step fifteen: *Jatoe-gep*, in praise of birds.

Step sixteen: *Nangsa*, dedicated to *Ashinangsa* [a Tibetan queen].

Step seventeen: *Choep*, praying to the lamas and local deities.

Step eighteen: *Trashhi*, concluding aspirations of the occasion.

2.1.3.2. The gallant warrior

Punakha *Dromchoe* was first staged to celebrate Bhutan's resounding victory over the invading Tibetan forces in the 17th century and to propitiate the tutelary deities, particularly Yeshe Goenpo. It is marked by a three-day extended pazap festival. *Pazaps* (warriors), attired for combat and brandishing the accessories of warfare, stage elaborate battle scenes to the accompaniment of loud trumpets, fireworks and war cries. The celebrations are an enactment of their victory over the many Tibetan invasions all of which were successfully repelled. The first festival was mounted by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who is said to have led the Tibetans into believing that the Ranjung Kharsapani, the revered relic that was the source of conflict between the two enemies, had been cast away in the river for good.

Apart from the rather theatrical ceremonial role, the festival depicts how the pazaps had played an important role in guarding Bhutan from external forces. Given the limited resources of the country, Bhutan could not afford to keep a standing army for defence purposes, so instead it established peasant militias that could be called upon at short notice to fight. The flexibility and cost-effectiveness of a pazap force compared to the







maintenance of an adequately strong standing army would have contributed to the security of the country by allowing a size of force disproportionate to the population to be raised, for short periods of time.

Pazap ceremonies that were held in the dzongs and the provinces were as much a ritual of peace as they were a show of strength and preparedness to deter aggression. Practices and performances of battle scenes were ideal training grounds for village men, young and old alike, who were introduced into the martial tradition. Thus, the pazaps are hailed as a benevolent warrior force.

2.1.3.3. The Dance of Gallant Warriors

Literally, the term *Jipai Pawo* refers to “young warriors or heroes”, who are symbolic of a bodyguard. There is no written history of the origin of Jipai Pawo. According to oral sources, when Bhutan was facing much internal strife the Paro Poenlop, Agay Haap was able to protect Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu who was his candidate for the post of 39th Desi. He escorted Zhabdrung to Thimphu safely and enthroned him as the Desi in 1850. On this occasion Poenlop Agay Haap staged Jipai Pawo for the first time. Young warriors escorted the Zhabdrung, dancing along the two sides of the ceremonial procession to prevent people from coming nearer to him and also to entertain the spectators as he was escorted to Trash Choedzong.

The main reason for performing Jipai Pawo was externally to protect the Zhabdrung from enemies and internally to show pride and bravery.

Today the dance is performed during ceremonial receptions accorded to dignitaries, to symbolise guarding the dignitaries. The dance with accompanying song of praise is performed in front of the podium, as a mark of honour and respect to the dignitaries and to wish them good health and long life. It is a traditional gesture of welcome and good-will incorporating in it sentiments of lasting friendship, cooperation and mutual respect.

Costumes and accessories for the dance are as follows:

1. A gho of either brocade or raw silk;
2. *Tub* (Five different colours of silk scarf criss-crossed over the chest);
3. *Baekham/Khabshub* (a pouch to contain a needle) hung by the side;
4. *Phor-shub* (a pouch to contain a bullet) hung by the side;

5. *Ngueshub* (a purse hung by the side);

6. *Ri-nga* (a gold-plated silver helmet);

7. A full white mid-calf length skirt worn over the gho;

8. A sword at the back;

9. A single scarf in the left hand and a *damaru* (small hand drum) in the right hand.

2.1.4. Drama

In the 15th century, as had been prophesied by the protective deities, Thangtong Gyalpo came to Bhutan. Considered as the father of Tibetan opera, it is said that he raised money for his various bridge-building projects in Tibet through developing a dharma theatre troupe which performed operas, recited mantras and told tales meant to subdue demons and teach sentient beings. Arriving via the Chumbi valley with his followers in 1433, he went on to build temples in western Bhutan and chain-link iron suspension bridges over big rivers. It is believed that Thangtong Gyalpo brought the knowledge of the dramatic arts to Bhutan as well as introducing many songs and dances. Although no records are available to tell us how the new art form developed over the following centuries, it may be presumed that the tradition was maintained within the monastic institutions. In the 1980s the tradition was revived, with the then Semtokha Rigzhung Institute as pioneer in composition and mounting of new productions based on earlier tradition, to educate people on our cultural values and also to entertain them in an era where modernisation was already under way but television and video had yet to be introduced to provide popular entertainment. Since drama involves depicting human emotions and engaging the audience, the new art form with its staged enactment of traditional stories and legends soon gained popularity. Legends staged by Bhutanese artists included the following: Biographical legend of Khandro Drowa Zangmo, Gyalpo Norzang, Nangsa Oebum, Ling Gesar, Yeshe Tshogyal, Life of Drukpa Kuenley, Khandro Sonam Peldron, and Life of Lord Buddha. Schools offering a modern education later took up the dramatic arts, mainly staging modern dramas. In the 1990s the Dzongkha Development Commission made video recordings of most of the dramas staged in schools and other organizations.

More recently, plays by Shakespeare and other foreign dramatists of high standing have been staged for the Bhutanese audience, either in their original medium or in translation. From the Bhutanese perspective, all forms of the dramatic arts are the means of benefitting other beings and the actors are believed to be accumulating merit based on their own intentions.

2.1.5. The Music and Musical Instruments

The origin of music is attributed to Lhamo Yangchenma or goddess Sarasvati, according to the Buddhist texts. There is both spontaneous music and music created by external conditions. Spontaneous music refers to that created by one's own voice without having to depend on any other external condition, while the music created by external conditions refers to instrumental music. There are two different styles of music, namely *yangring* (music with longer melody) and *yangthung* (music with shorter melody).

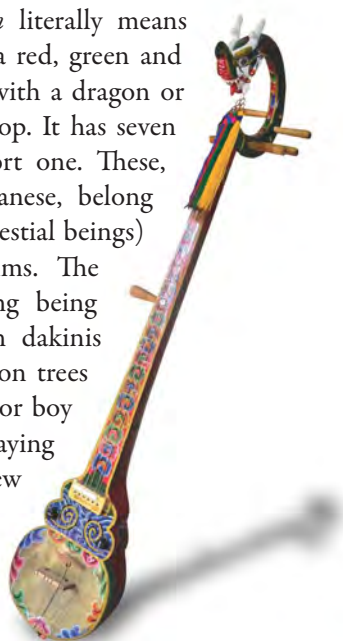
Yangring is used for singing spiritual and classical Bhutanese songs, and the musical instrument is tuned according to the song. The bodily movements that accompany such songs are usually slow with facial expressions depicting devotion and respect.

Yangthung is used for singing court songs (boedra). The bodily movement is more rapid, more instruments accompany the song, and facial expressions reflect the lyrics.

2.1.5.1. Musical Instruments

Musical instruments in Bhutan consist of folk instruments and religious instruments. Folk instruments are played during festivals and for entertainment. Bhutanese songs are predominantly lyrics-based. The quality of the voice and clarity of the singing are considered more important than the musical accompaniment. The traditional instruments used to accompany singers are therefore quite rudimentary, and in most songs they are rendered somewhat redundant.

Dram-nyen: *Dram-nyen* literally means melodious sound. It is a red, green and blue painted long lute with a dragon or crocodile head on the top. It has seven strings, including a short one. These, according to the Bhutanese, belong to the seven *dakinis* (celestial beings) from the celestial realms. The story behind one string being short is that the seven dakinis left their lutes hanging on trees while taking bath. A poor boy found one and started playing it. When the dakinis flew away the youngest was left behind to get her dram-nyen from the boy. But the boy



refused to return the dram-nyen. So the dakini had to leave it with him under two conditions: he was to play the instrument only at midnight and never to let other humans play it. The boy promised to do so.

Every midnight he played the instrument and the dakini visited him. The poor boy became richer day by day. The villagers became curious and tried to find out the secret behind his success. A few girls found out about the dram-nyen and played it greedily. The dakini appeared when she heard the melody but was disheartened to see that it was not the boy playing her dram-nyen. Out of anger she broke one string. The poor boy realised that he had broken the oath due to his carelessness, and went to beg for forgiveness. He succeeded in persuading her, but the instrument became public. The seven strings represent the seven dakini sisters. The short string represents the youngest sister, symbolizing the broken pledge.

The dram-nyen is one of the most sacred musical instruments used for non-religious purposes in Bhutan. It is the instrument of the goddess Sarasvati (Lhamo Yangchenma) who appears holding a dram-nyen to fulfill the wishes of mankind. The dram-nyen has to be handled with care and respect since it is the instrument used for offering melodies to Buddha. It is believed that one gains merit if playing the dram-nyen with devotion. If one happens to play carelessly or with disrespect, one will meet with misfortune as the melody causes emotional crisis among other beings. If handled and played with respect, the dram-nyen is believed to help one gain wealth, glory, and great merit. However, apart from the above spiritual use, the instrument is also used for other entertainment nowadays.

Yangchen: The yangchen or dulcimer is a stringed board instrument painted in green, red and blue colours. Although the instrument is commonly used in the presentation of boedra songs and dances, it is not an indigenous Bhutanese instrument. Today, the performers at the Royal Academy of Performing Arts use an assortment of dram-nyen, yangchen and lingm in the presentation of their *boedra* songs and dances.

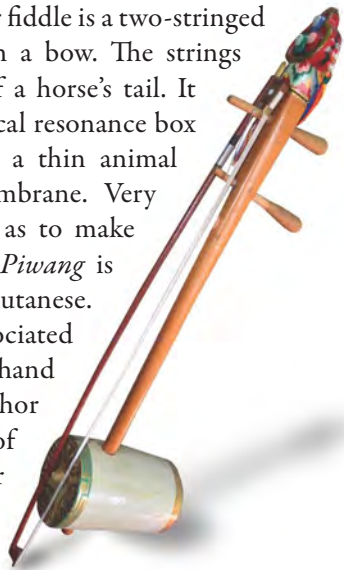




Lingm: The lingm is a six-holed bamboo flute indigenous to Bhutan. It is the most popular musical instrument as it is easily accessible to all. The lingm is a favourite instrument of herders, who play it to pass the long and tedious hours they must spend in the pastures. There are two varieties of lingm: the one blown from the front is called *dong lingm* and the one blown from the side is called *zurlingm*. It is the musical instrument of Choepai Lhamo, the dakini who makes the music offering to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who is depicted holding a lingm.

Sometimes the instrument of a good flute-player was thought to have been blessed by the deity, and in that case it would be kept in a temple because it was considered sacred.

Piwang: The piwang, or fiddle is a two-stringed instrument played with a bow. The strings are made from hairs of a horse's tail. It has a rounded, cylindrical resonance box which is covered with a thin animal skin as resonance membrane. Very thin skins are used so as to make the sound better. The *Piwang* is considered typically Bhutanese. *Piwang* is mostly associated with *Boedra*. It is the hand instrument of Yuelkhor Sung (Dhritarashtra of the East), one of the four Guardian Deities of the four directions.



Kongtha: The kongtha, or mouth harp is a thin and short piece of bamboo attached to a string. It is common among the village youth since it can be easily made. The skill to cut and shape bamboo pieces comes naturally to rural folk, who spend a lot of time in the forests. It is a three inch long piece of bamboo with two

narrow slits cut lengthwise along it to make a tongue. One end of this is held by the thumb and hook of the index finger and placed between the lips while the other thumb and index finger of the other hand holds the string which is attached to the other end. The latter end is then pulled repeatedly to produce sound which can be regulated by breathing. Young women have been known to play this instrument. To be able to play this instrument well, one needs to master the breathing technique.

2.1.5.2 Religious Orchestral Instruments

Religious orchestral instruments are played during religious ceremonies and rituals. During rituals, reciting, chanting mantras and playing musical instruments are fundamental. Religious orchestral instruments are in pairs signifying skilful means or method and wisdom (thab dang she rab).

The most commonly used religious orchestral instruments are: Dung, Jaling, Nga, Drillbu, Trangtri, Choedram, Rolmo, Sil-nyen, Kangdung, Dungkar and Tingshag. A brief description of each of them is as given below:

Dung: The dung is a long, telescopic trumpet made of copper or brass, measuring three to four metres in length when extended. The instrument is collapsible to make it easier to carry around. These trumpets are always played in pairs, and can be played both seated and standing. Monks play dung indoors as an accompaniment to temple rituals, and also outdoors on the ceremonial ground during tshechu as well as during formal processions (sometimes playing from rooftops).



Jaling: Oboe-like in sound, the jaling is a highly decorated, gilded copper reed instrument, which is trumpet shaped. It has six to seven holes with an upper back-hole for the thumb. It is played with the left hand fingering the lower notes and the right hand the upper. Jaling are always played in pairs and can be played both seated and standing.



Nga: This is a double-membrane large drum supported on a wooden carved base, which can be beaten on either side. A curved stick with a handle and padded skin tip is used to beat the drum. The nga can be played in pairs or singly, in accordance with the rhythm of the chanted verses.



Drilbu and dorji: Traditionally used as a set, these comprise a small bell made from a traditional metal alloy, which a monk holds in his left hand, and a dorji (vajra), a symbolic metal thunderbolt, which he holds in his right hand. Ringing the bell while brandishing the dorji symbolises the perfect union of method and wisdom, or skilful means and discriminating awareness.



Trangtri: The trangtri is a decorated hand drum made from wood or bones. Hour-glass shaped, it tapers to a narrow waist for holding purposes. When the holder twists it back and forth, two weighted strings attached to the waist of the trangtri swing from one side to the other, making a beating sound. Choedram is the bigger version of Trangtri. It has the same appearance and is played in the same way.



Rolmo: The rolmo is a large cymbal, shaped rather like a shallow hat, with a flat rim and central boss (or shallow dome), to which is fixed a cloth handle.



Gripping a cymbal in either hand by the cloth handles, the player holds the pair horizontally and clashes them together. Rolmo are used in the rites for wrathful deities.

Si-nyen: Medium-sized and small-sized cymbals, respectively. These are held vertically and used in the rites for peaceful deities.



Kangdung: The kangdung, or thigh bone trumpet, is traditionally made by hollowing out a human thighbone and drilling a hole in each of the two sides of the knee protuberances. The drilled holes are hollowed out to a bell-like shape, creating a double-headed trumpet. The blowing end may be shaped slightly to form a conical mouthpiece. As a monastic instrument, the trumpet may be fashioned from metal in imitation of a human thighbone (femur).



Also known by the name *kangling*, the instrument is played according to the chanting of religious scripts. The sound made by the trumpet is said to be pleasing to the wrathful deities and terrifying to the evil spirits.

Dungkar: Dungkar literally means 'white conch'. The conch is one of the eight auspicious objects of Buddhism and symbolizes Buddha's mighty proclamation of the Dharma. It is a sacred symbol of peace and good energy. The dungkar, or conch-shell trumpet, is used both in religious ceremonies and to summon the public to certain ceremonies.



Tingsha: Small hand cymbals attached to each other with a cord. When struck together, they produce a clear, high pitched tone. They are traditionally used in specific rituals.



2.2. TRADITIONAL GAMES

The traditional games of Bhutan required no sophisticated materials or equipment but always made-do with what was available. Bhutan is an agrarian country and still a majority of the population depend on agriculture and farm produce. In a typical Bhutanese family, sons (and sometimes even daughters in the absence of sons) were always bestowed with the responsibility of herding cows or whatever livestock the family raised. They would spend days in the pastureland letting their cows graze the rich grasses. During those idle times, herders would spend their time together playing different games with make-shift items. Some say that the simplest game would have been invented by the cow herders of those days when they had nothing much to do, but to explore their minds and innovate something to pass their time.

There are many kinds of simple out door games like, “*Bang jug*” (Free Running), “*Eb tsoel*” (Hide and Seek), “*Akay changni*” (Swing), “*Lem lem*” (See-saw), “*Do chung*” (Furthest Stone Throw), and “*Khakhe*” (Snow exchange) a game played on the first day of the snowfall. “*Hung khay*” (Pillow Fight) involves two men atop a suspended wooden beam facing each other and armed with pillows that they swing at each other in an attempt to throw the opponent off the beam. Other games are “*Ji thu*” (Weight Lifting) and “*Thap then ni*” (Tug of War).

There are other indoor mind-developing games like “*Nya baep*” (Fish and Frog), *Kolokpa* and “*Ta dang nor*” (Tiger and Cow), “*Gyalpo ta sho*” (King losing Horse) which not only have positive educational impact but also improves one’s mental faculty, enhances concentration and sharpness. There are also games based on religious aspects played primarily by monks called “*Sa lam droe ma*”, a highly regarded spiritual game based on religious composition. It is a very intricate game where players have to believe in fate and have utmost faith in religion. The outline of the game can be faintly compared to snakes and ladders game.

However, in this game, players have to go through numerous kinds of heaven and hell. One uses only one dice and a huge hand written paper for a board where all the composition of the game is written. The game can be played with any number of players. The main objective is to accomplish heavenly realms without spending much time in hell(s). It is believed that if one falls into one of the many hells and takes more time than required to get out, one is naturally compelled to vow to do virtuous deeds like offering butter lamps or chant the sacred mantra 100,000 times or prostrate the equal times. An interesting observation is, when players take the dice and rub it inside their palms and cross their hands and place it on their forehead and fervently pray before playing the dice to relieve from the hellish stages.

Modern technologies have made things easier and viable. Traditional games have started to disappear in the phase of luxurious entertainments and sports. The only remaining popular games are the Archery and the barely surviving *Khuru* because these are touched by modern technology as the traditional bamboo bows and arrows are replaced by compound bows made of fibreglass and arrows made of metallic substances. The influence of television and internet have overwhelmingly taken the attention of youth these days, though a few of the traditional games played in the past are included in rare *Nyagoe* contests while some others are played during the annually held National Day celebrations.

2.2.1. Archery

Datse or archery is deeply rooted in the history and legends of the country besides also having spiritual association. In the 15th century, Lama Drukpa Kuenley shot an arrow from Phari in Tibet which hit the staircase of one Pelzang Buthri’s house in a village called *Toebesa* in Punakha. By and by the game of archery has been promoted by our hereditary kings with great enthusiasm, particularly the Second King Jigme Wangchuck. But before archery became an entertainment sport, bows and arrows were used as weapons to hunt and during battles.

Today, archery is the most popular and important sport in Bhutan. It was designated as the National Game in 1971, following Bhutan’s 1970 admission to the United

Nations during the reign of the third king, H.M. Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.

Archery goes by different names in different regions. In Dzongkha it is called *Datse* mostly in the western part of the country while in Bumthang (district in central Bhutan) it goes by the name *Mew*. However, the method and equipment used to play the game is not very distinct from each other. The essence of the game however remains the same even today although a lot has changed in the equipment used. There are three basic elements required to play the game of archery. Those are - a bow (*Zhu*), a pair of arrow (*Da*) for each player and targets (*baa*) on each side.



2.2.1.1. Bow

The *Zhu*, or bow, is made from a distinct species of bamboo called the *zhu shing* which is only grown in the warmer parts of the country. There are generally two types of bow, *tab zhu* and *chang zhu*. The stems of *zhu shing* are cut about 1.5 metres long, then dried naturally in the sun which may take up to 75 days or smoke-dried in the kitchen which takes less time, before they are cut into two equal parts and then joined in the middle. This is literally the *tab zhu* which means folded bow. In earlier times, the joint in the middle section of the *tab zhu* was securely bound by a leather or cloth strap. However nowadays materials like copper or steel wire are used to bind the two pieces of the bow together. This is the most commonly used bow type because of its flexibility, durability and strength. The other type of bow used in the olden days was the *chang zhu*, which cut out directly from the *zhu shing* in the required length. The length of this bow depends on the height of the player. A tall player needs a relatively longer bow and vice versa. This type of bow was originally used as weapons to hunt wild animals. *Chang zhu* is still popular in the country.

The traditional bow string used to be made from a wild vine plant called *tshelme pangki*. It is believed that there normally is a specified season when the vine is obtained. The vine is then cut into four parts and dried. Then the skins are removed which then becomes small thread-like and then all four pieces are wound together to make a strong bowstring. Today, the industrial high-end nylon strings are used which are easier to find and stronger.

2.2.1.2. Arrow

Da (arrows) are made from a particular species of bamboo of which the most preferred kind is called *Jala Yangka*. It grows in *Jala* area of Wangdue Phodrang district in Western Bhutan hence the name *Jala Yangka*. These bamboos are cut to the required height and dried for a long period of time. But one can also use heat to dry the bamboo more quickly. It is then washed, dried, straightened and polished. A notch is curved out from one end of the arrow. All these require a skilled craftsman to produce a perfect pair of arrows. The feathers are then attached to the shaft of the arrow using traditional hide glue. The most commonly used feathers are that of the monal pheasant but rare feathers are often classified as special. A special five-coloured thread is wound around just below the notch and above the attached feather. The arrowheads (*dachag*) are made from metal sheets especially made by blacksmiths. Different kinds of arrow heads are used for different purpose. The *dachags* are attached at the end of the arrow with special indigenous glue called *la chu* which becomes gluey when heated and strengthens when dried.

There are other accessories like *lem cha* and *dzug shup*. These are protective gears worn by an archer. The *lem cha* is a protective strap made from clothes or leather worn on the left hand side by a right-handed archer. It protects the arm from being hit by the bowstring when releasing the arrow. The *dzug shup* is a finger guard also made from leather to protect an archer's finger while drawing the bow string.

2.2.1.3. Quivers

Sorae (quivers) is a Dzongkha term and in the language of tshangla the term used is *sor palang*. The quiver is made of either wood or bamboo. Ostentatious quivers which have intricate designs are also made depending on a person's affordability.

2.2.1.4. Targets

There are different kinds of *ba* (targets) used while playing a game of archery. Some of the targets are relatively longer while some are shorter. The longer targets measure about one *dom* ('Dom' – measurement equal to the length of both arms outstretched in opposite directions). A white sheet is glued over the front of the board which is then painted with lime. In the centre of the target, a circular drawing is painted in the colours of the rainbow. The centre of the circle is painted dark as bull's eye. The bottom of the target is also painted to show water and earth. The shorter target may be about 45 cm high and 15 cm wide or less.



The traditional archery field spans about 130 to 140 metres between the two targets. The targets are fixed on the ground at each end of the range facing each other. There are many kinds of archery matches. There are friendly matches where the games are played for fun and entertainment. The important match is called *Chogda* where two teams from two different villages or regions or even districts participate in a game of archery which lasts for about two days. The best of three sets of game wins the match. *Chogda* is an important game which is highly associated with traditional beliefs. People believe that the winning team portrays good omen and would bring forth good fortune to the village while on the other hand, the losing team is denounced and believed that misfortune would unfold in the village. Therefore, before the actual day of the game and sometimes even days before the game, the teams seek astrological advice and ask for blessings and guidance of their deity.

A team comprises 11 players but the number of players can be more or less as agreed by both teams prior to the match. They are ushered into the archery ground in a traditional ceremonial manner. A *Marchang* ceremony

is also conducted before the game commences offering alcohol to the deities for a safe and peaceful match. It is also important for all the players to agree the rules for measuring scores. A *karey* (a hit on the target) fetches two points. A hit on the bull's eye, earns three points for the team. If an arrow ricochets off the target it manages one point. There is also a *sa karey* where the archer hits the target but below the ground. When an arrow lands very close to the target it is called *daya* and earns a point but only if it is closer to the target than that of an opponent. However, if an opponent's arrow hits the target, the *daya* is discounted. One also earns a point when an arrow skids from the ground and hits the target as well as when an arrow hits the target but jumps off the target and splits a piece of wood from the target. This way of counting the points can be worked out precisely and decided prior to the game. In the game of *chhogda* there is no stake but considered very auspicious for the team as it becomes a matter of prestige and beliefs mentioned above. If a member of the royal family participates in the game, only his pair of arrows can be kept in front of the target while the shooting is in progress. The arrows of the players must be kept away from the target.

Wives and other women also participate in the game indirectly. They help prepare large feasts consisting of elaborate meals and wine and other local edibles. Women also partake as supporters and dance to entertain the audience. The cheering women are allowed to make fun of the opponent players by making any kind of remarks in their songs including humour and mockery. This is aimed at distracting the opponent and making him miss the target. This is called *dakha logni*.

Dhakha logni is performed only during important archery competitions. Moreover, this unique way of cheering is only performed from the half way point of the final deciding game. The team of cheerers stands at one end of the range while the cheerers for the opponent stand at the other end. The cheerers also encourage the archers of the team they support with praising songs.







Following are a few words used while distracting the opponent players.

Hopelessness! Hopelessness!

Oh! He who shoots toward the wide southern plains;

The bald headed one! You will not hit the target;

It will slip away, even if you hit the target;

May it go higher and miss the target;

May it fall short of the target;

May it be swayed by the wind in between;

May it disturb the arrow, bow and both. Here is an encouraging song for the team members:

The arrow of a gentleman; (used for an ordinary person)

The arrow of lord with power; (used only for a high-ranking official)

May it not fly too high;

May it not land low, short of the distance;

May the wind not disturb its flight;

May it hit straight on the bull's eye.

During the olden days when the king participated in an archery game, the person who hit the target the highest number of times would be rewarded with coins and cash and also clothes of extravagant quality.

Archery has evolved in many ways since its inception to the present day use of technologically enhanced equipment. Nowadays, traditional bows and arrows are used by fewer people while playing casual games. Quite often, special tournaments are organised in which contestants must use the traditional equipment. Archery enthusiasts make the modern compound bows their first choice of equipment and mostly use these both in friendly games, sometimes for small betting, and also in organized tournaments where there are major prizes to be won.

2.2.2. Stone Discus

Doegor is a traditional sport played by men of all ages as a pastime. It is played using two flat round-shaped stones hurled at a target almost hidden in the ground at each of the opposite ends of the field, about 25 metres apart. It is one of the simplest games ever played since it doesn't



require more than a pair of flat stones. One only needs two round and flat stones barely a kilogram in weight for each player and the targets are made from a stake of bamboo or any other wood. The stake is inserted into the ground so that it is hardly visible. There is no standard for the number of players in a team. It can be played between two players at least or more depending on the consent of the participants.

Each player hurls the round stone at the target from one end to the other and the one which lands closest to the target earns a point. The distance between the target and the stone is measured by a yardstick. The interesting part is when the following opponent players are allowed to displace the stone that has earned a point and replace it with their own.

Doegor is played by laymen, farmers and even monks all over Bhutan mostly to pass their free time such as New Year or on holidays. The stake for the game differs from place to place and the people who are involved in the game, but mostly takes the form of dinner or feasts hosted by the losing team.

2.2.3. Soksom or Sorsum

Soksom is a type of game played in the olden days by cow herders to pass their leisure time while they are watching over their grazing cows. A thin and strong piece of bamboo about two metres long, or a stiff and thin branch is cut and sharpened at one end. This game can be played between two players, or between two teams if there are more players. This appears more like javelin throw but at a specific target rather than covering the long distances.

Two targets are fixed facing each other at a distance of about 20-25 metres apart. The targets are made of soft wood 45 cm long and 8 cm wide chopped flat. Each player gets to throw a pair of soksom at the target and fetches two points on hitting it while the one which lands nearest to the target is measured by using three fingers (hence, the name soksom or three fingers) which fetches one point. The player should hold the long soksom just below the middle and then it is thrown at the target with the strength required to reach the other end.

The sharp shooter who manages to hit both soksoms at the target secures four points. This is a race to 25 points and the team securing the first 25 points wins the game. Initially, they would bet for coins during the olden days, money or the losers would have to bring enough packed lunch the next day for the winners as well. The sharp end after it hits the target is no longer sharp so a new end is sharpened at the same place. This process goes on until the whole soksom gets shortened by almost half, thereby another bamboo or a thin branch is cut out to make a new one.

2.2.4. Jigdum

Jigdum is also a game played mostly by the cow herders in the woods during their free time especially by young boys. The main instrument in this game is a short javelin about 45 cm long pointed at both ends. There is a shorter branch, also pointed, in the middle. The targets are placed at a distance of about 35 metres apart. The target is also made out of soft wood which is about 60 cm long and 4 cm broad with the surface of the target basically smoothened.

A player holds the longer branch of the jigdum in his hand and throws it at the target so that it spins like the Australian Boomerang and hit the target with a pointed end.

The points are simply calculated. The players are allowed a pair of jigdum each and each hit at the target fetches two points while the nearest one is measured by a span (outstretched middle finger and thumb) which secures one point. The measuring of points differs depending on the players from place to place. The other system of measuring the point is using the length of the jigdum itself. It is a race to 25 points and whoever scores it first wins the game. This is played by two or more players and the bets are simply to bring enough lunch for the next day by the losers. Sometimes they would play for wine, but at times the loser is required to go and round up the cattle scattered across the pasture.



2.2.5. Wrestling

The Bhutanese version of wrestling is known as *keshe* (means holding by waist or two opponents wrestling by grabbing each other's belt). Over time, the pronunciation of word has changed from Kay shay to Kishi. This wrestling is held between two adult or young adult men to show their strength over one another while at the same time earning respect in their region. Sometimes the young people would showcase their power of strength over another to impress the women they like.

This is a game played mostly by villagers in the remote areas in Bhutan. In former times wrestling used to be a practice among the members of the service corps in the royal court or among the apprentices in the monastery. In some places wrestling is mainly conducted on the evening of Karmai Nyarub festival.

Two persons grip one another firmly about the waist, each holding onto the other's *kera* (belt) and trying to throw the other to the ground. This game requires strength, agility and balance. Without good balance, one's strength can also be a disadvantage.

In the early days there was no particular occasion or special time to hold this kind of contest. It was a call-on game by one person to the other over different reasons such as provocations or for fun. Today, strong men from all over the country are gathered together for kyeshe competition in Thimphu during the celebrations for national day and for the birth anniversary of the reigning monarch.

2.2.6. Dice Game

The dice game (*sho tse*) is an indoor game with its origins in Tibet. It is believed that early traders from Bhutan who went to Tibet for business brought the game back with them. It is played mostly by middle aged men in Bhutan. The game can be played between



two to four persons individually competing against each other but the most preferred number of players is three.

The components required to play this game are 64 small shells and two dice, small cubes with faces bearing one to six dark, usually indented spots. Each player should have a set of nine coins that are distinct from those of the other players. It is a complex game for beginners and spectators as one keeps playing. The game requires quick thinking and rapid execution. During the first round, each player can stack up two coins at a time as the base home. As they play on, one can stack up as many coins as possible at one's home (the start) provided the dice one throws gives out the home number. If one's throw produces a similar number to that of the other players, he can oust the existing coins and replace them with his own. The one who can stack up as many coins as he can and reaches the goal is the winner. It is also an amusing game because before a player rolls out or literally thumps down the dice, he shouts a line of words with the name of the numbers he requires. Sometimes a player says funny things to amuse the others. The actual charm of the game is in the verses calling for the required number to come.

This game is usually played indoors among friends to entertain themselves, but it is also a notorious gambling game and forbidden in public places.

2.2.7. Three and One Dice Game

Three and one dice game, or *suk para*, is also a type of a dice game played between two persons or more. There is only one dice with faces bearing one to six dark, usually indented spots. The players bet on only one and three, hence the name *suk para* (*suk* means three, *para* means one). One of the players rolls out the dice. If the dice shows one on the uppermost side, the players who put their stakes on three lose, and vice versa. If the dice shows the numbers of holes other than one and three, it is a tie whereby the dice is rolled out again until one of the two numbers appears.

The numeric terminologies for the dice games are different from the normal linguistic terms and are used only while playing the game.

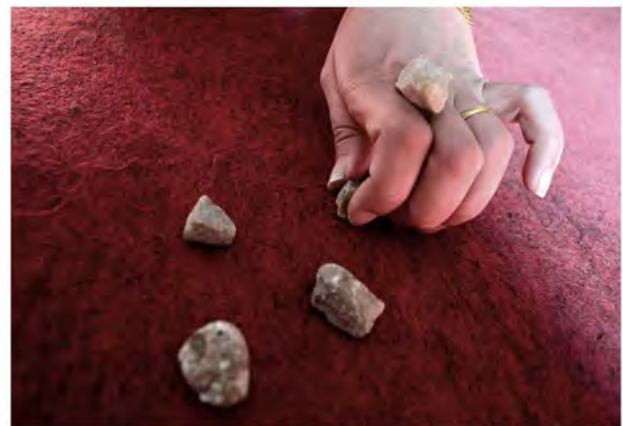
2.2.8. Stone Game

Popularly known as *ek dupa*, the stone game is a very simple game played by teenage girls mostly in the eastern part of Bhutan. It requires only five small round shaped pebbles which can all fit inside the palm. Those days the girls used to play the game with their friends at home or out in the farms while their mothers were at work. Sometimes even young boys took interest in joining the girls to play.

The game is played at five levels, each bearing a distinctive name. In the first level, which is called *ek dupa*, the player holds all five stones in her palm and throws them upwards. She then turns the palm to face the ground, stretching out her fingers to let the pebbles land on the back of her hand. At least one pebble should remain on the back of her hand while falling from above. Then she attempts to pick up those which landed on the ground. She must throw the pebbles on the back of her hand up into the air and collect those on the ground with the same palm which she spreads out to allow those in the air to fall on her palm. This way all the pebbles should be in her palm after the second throw. The game can go on to *ek tripa* and so on.

The next level, *dhue dupa*, requires her to throw the stones on the ground and keep one clasped in between her index finger and the thumb. This time she has to pick up two stones at a time while the one in her hand is thrown in the air.

In the third level, *teen dupa*, the four stones are thrown on the ground. She has to pick up three stones together and after that pick the remaining one.

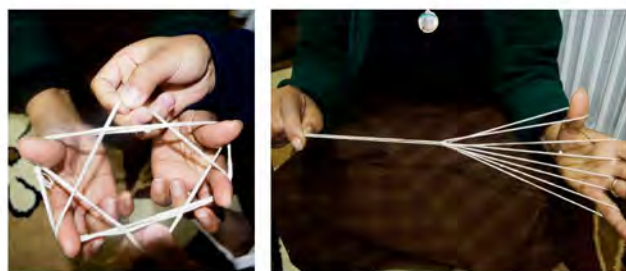


The fourth level, *dhap dhapi* is however a bit tricky and quite hard. While she has all the five stones in her palm, she has to throw one in the air and quickly put all the remaining four stones on the ground and catch the one in the air. Then she has to finish the process by throwing one stone in the air and pick up all four stones and receive the one in the air on her palm. The player has to repeat this five times successfully to advance to the final level. Nonetheless, before advancing to the final level, a player has to finish one more stage, called *jili guto* or *kekchi*, where she has to manage to hold the stones on the back of her hand with palm facing down and fingers making a fist.

The final level, *ama tsukpay* requires both hands of the player. This is the most difficult part of the game. She has to stretch the fingers of her left hand a bit, resting the fingertips on the ground and arching the palm to shape her hand into a little cave. The player then gently releases four stones on the ground near the mouth of the cave. The twist in this final level is that the opponent chooses one particular stone which is located at a strategically difficult point for the player to send the other stones past it and into the cave. This chosen stone is called the *ama*, hence the name *ama tsukpay*. The *ama* has to be knocked into the cave after all the other stones have been put inside. But no matter how far the stones are from the mouth of the cave, the player gets only two hits per stone to knock it into the cave and only one hit at the stone chosen by the opponent to get it into the cave. When all the stones are inside the cave, the player has one final move, that is, to collect all the stones like in the fourth level. After this, the player successfully completes one round of the game. However, if the player fails in one of the levels, the turn goes to the opponent but she can pick up from where the game was left off in the next round.

2.2.9. Bird's Foot Thread Game

The bird's foot thread game called *kuep tsay jayi kang pa* is known by different names in different parts of Bhutan. It is played mostly by young girls and sometimes even by boys. Two players are involved in the game. One presents the thread made into a pattern



by her outstretched fingers while the other picks up the thread from the pattern to form another pattern. Each pattern has a different name like *drami* or *jayi kang pa* (hen's feet) and several other patterns. The player who can pick the most patterns is credited best while the player who fails to pick a shape is downgraded and her lack of skill is derided in extremely colloquial terms.

2.2.10. Bull Fight

Langthap, the Bhutanese version of bull fight is an outdoor game which is played between bulls and also between young boys and men to determine the strongest in a group, or in a village. It means bull (*lang*) and fight (*thap*). Sometimes they play to impress the girls they like in their village to win her hands and sometimes simply to earn respect among their peers as the strongest person. Only two persons of strongly competitive dispositions would contest for the title bout.



Two persons position themselves on the ground on their hands and knees about a couple of feet from each other and charge at each other just like real bulls. On the count of three, the two men bump shoulders forcefully using all their strength to try to push the opponent to the ground. The winner earns his respect until someone else makes a new challenge.

2.2.11. Cock Fighting

Cock fighting, or *ja dzing* used to be a popular game among young boys during their free time at home or in the forest where they take their cattle to graze. It is a simple game played mostly between two players although multiple players can also participate in teams.

Standing on his left foot with his right foot raised behind him, each player must grip his clothing at the chest area tightly with his left hand while gripping his right foot with his right hand. Standing facing one other, only about a foot apart, each moves forward in an attempt



to knock the other off balance so that he loses his grip on his right foot. The one that lets his foot drop first loses the game. It requires the player to use his instinct and make the move by studying the movement of the opponent. This game also became popular in schools.

2.2.12. Weight Throwing Game

The game of backwards weight throwing is called *jab dho*. It is a kind of an outdoor sport where a man throws a heavy weight backward over his head with all his strength. But *jab* (back) *dho* (stone) is somewhat similar to the hammer throw in the Olympic Games but without the chains to hold the weight. There is no measurement of how far a person can throw the weight over his head. The man holds a heavy stone or a wooden block with both of his hands and swings it between his legs. When he has gained enough momentum, he hurls the weight over his head as far as he can. The throw is then measured by distance. Thus, he earns a reputation of a strong man in the community.

Today, this game is played as one of the events in a strongman competition in Bhutan although its standard is still indigenous and different from that of the Olympics.

2.2.13. Shot-put

The Bhutanese version of shot-put, called *pung dho*, is closer to the shot-put in Olympics except that the shot-put is randomly picked from the ground. *Pung dho*, as elders recall, was a game played by men to measure strength among their



friends. A heavy spherical stone is randomly selected for the challenge. Any number of players can participate in this sport. A line is drawn from where a player should hurl the stone. The player holds the stone on his palm above the shoulder. A right-hand thrower keeps his left foot in front of the line and then the right foot is used to kick in motion whilst tossing the stone. The first drop is marked and the other players follow.

There is another technique of tossing the stone called *Chong do* wherein a player gets the option to run to the line for a few metres before tossing the stone. It would be prearranged by the players themselves if they can use either option or just one. The goal is however, to release the stone with maximum force in a forward motion to see who throws the farthest. Outwardly the game is played for fun, but inwardly it is a contest for strength.

2.2.14. Hide and Seek

Hide and seek or *eeb tshoel* is basically a game of hide and seek (*eeb* means hide and *tshoel* means seek) played by children inside their homes. It is commonly known to the children as *kuku*. Any number of children can play the game. One among the children is selected as the seeker while all others have to hide around the house. The seeker has to either count down from ten to one before he or she starts to look for the others or a warning alert has to be sounded that he or she is coming to look for them. If he or she receives no answer, then the seeker is assured that everyone has hid themselves.

The first child who is discovered by the seeker is out of the game and the last person is acclaimed as king or queen of the game. The child who is discovered first becomes the seeker for the next round of the game and the process goes on and on. There is nothing to lose or win in this game but it is just a little game for children to keep themselves occupied.

2.2.15. Game of Sticks

The game of *tsang dum* is a simple game played between two persons with a bunch of small sticks. The bunch should be made up of at least 20 to 25 pieces of finely cut sticks, each about the length of the index finger. The number of sticks depends on the players willing to add more fun and time to play. The more sticks, the more time it takes to end the game. The player holds the bunch of sticks inside his fist and puts it on the ground in an upright position before releasing it without any force. He picks up the stick which has fallen furthest from the others and uses it to throw away the others without disturbing any other stick. The difficult part is when the sticks are lying on top of the other. The player



has to remove them one by one without touching the underlying stick. If the player happens to move the lower stick while picking up the other one, he is disqualified. The turn goes to the opponent player, but the first player keeps all the sticks he had picked up in the first round. A new game starts all over again by the second player by releasing the sticks repeating the process. At the end of the game, the players count the number of sticks to see who has collected the most.

2.2.16. Sling Shot

Sling shot or *wur dho* is a kind of weapon used mostly by cow herders to hurl stones at wild animals. Sometimes farmers also use slings to drive off monkeys and other pests in the farms. A sling is a relatively flat rope of about one fathom long and has two straps in the middle which can hold a pebble. With the pebble held in the strap, both ends of the rope are held in hand. One end is thicker and has a loop enough to put a finger while the other side tapers towards the end. The loop is locked in the fingers so that it does not slip off the hand. The slinging rope with a pebble in the middle is then swung round and round until it picks up enough speed. When the holder gains enough speed, he releases the narrow end of the sling so that the stone is hurled at the target. Apart from the throw, it also makes a crackling sound that resonates through the area. In order to use a sling, one must stand at a vantage point and free of any obstruction for a radius of three metres. As a game, the players test how far they can throw the pebble or hit a target at a distance.

2.2.17. Darts

The traditional darts game, *khuru* which is played on special events like local festivals used to be a gender-specific game, played only by men in Bhutan, but nowadays it is also played by women. It is the next most popular game after archery played generally all over Bhutan. It involves throwing a dart at a target at either end of a field of about 20-25 metres in length. The targets are made from wood which should be around



10 cm thick. The cylindrically shaped wooden darts are around 20 cm long and carved from hardwood. Earlier, two feathers of a bird were fixed at one end while a strong stick fixed at the other end. The dart is hand-carved in order to give a tapering shape. Two teams consisting of any convenient number can each throw a pair of darts alternately from each team at the target. Each hit right on the target fetches 2 points while the one nearest to the target as measured by the length of the *khuru*, fetches one point. *Khuru* is played in competition between teams from different places. Most often friends play among themselves on special occasions like New Year celebrations for fun and for the love of the game.

2.2.18. Pocket Pebble Game

The pocket pebble game *dus za lay* is a simple game played by teenagers and children outside their homes. Seven small pockets are dug out in the ground in a strategic manner so that there are two rows of three pockets facing each other. A main pocket called *Apa Gutoh* is centred at the top away from the rest of the pockets. All the pockets are filled with 5 pebbles each except the main one is kept empty. Two players are involved in the game. The first player can pick a bunch of pebbles from any pocket and drop each pebble in the consecutive holes in a clockwise direction. The player keeps filling the pockets until a point where he or she drops the last pebble in one pocket. If the next one is empty, he/she makes a swiping gesture at the empty pocket and whatever number of pebbles collected inside the following pocket is won. A player cannot make the run if the last pebble is dropped just before the *apa gutoh* pocket (provided the *apa gutoh* is filled). Each of the players can start by choosing any pocket (except the main one) filled with pebbles during their turn. A good tip would be that you pick the pocket that is most filled after the initial round. The ultimate winner is the one who collects the greatest number of pebbles. Getting a chance to empty the main pocket earns a lot of pebbles since that pocket is the toughest one to empty.

2.2.19. Arm Gripping Competition

The arm gripping competition is called *pare shere* in Bhutan usually sported by young men trying to show their physical strength. This game is also commonly known as *pare shere* in Dzongkha. Two players are involved in this game. For instance, Player A firmly grips one of Player B's wrists with both hands. Player B then tries to free the hand from Player B's grip by rapidly twisting his wrists about, but without using his other hand to help. If he succeeds in freeing his hand from the grip of Player A, he wins the round. Similarly, in the next round they change their sides and the same technique is followed. In the whole contest, the best of 3 becomes the winner.

2.2.20. Snowball Hiding Game

Kha khe (snowball hiding) is a game played on the first day of the first snowfall of the season. *Kha khe* is a term used in the western regions of Bhutan while *khacha* is a term used by locals in the central regions (such as Trongsa and Bumthang) for the same game. Small pieces of different items like rice, chili, cheese, butter, salt, tea leaves and other essential items are carefully concealed inside a leaf which is encased in snow to form a hardened snowball. The snowball is then discreetly hidden in a neighbour's kitchen beside the mud oven or somewhere

nearby the hearth. If the owner of the house does not detect it before the person leaves, he shouts from a distance to look for the snow ball. The house owner has to prepare a meal according to the ingredients found inside the snowball. But, if the person somehow forgets to include an essential item like salt in the snowball, the menu will be prepared without adding salt. On the contrary, if the neighbour comes to know of the hidden snowball before the visitor leaves the house, he or she can literally throw the snowball at the visitor. If the ball hits the visitor the house owner will claim the meal from him. Sometimes the initiator turns out to be the loser.

2.2.21. Winning the Eyebrow

This game is called *mingthong*. It is played by young herdsmen in remote villages in the eastern district of Lhuentse. Young boys set a target at a reasonable distance. The target can be any object, tree, log, rock, etc. The players throw stones from an agreed distance to try to hit the target. Anyone who successfully hits the target gets to pluck a hair from the eyebrows of the other players and place it on his head as a sign of victory. Hence, the name *minthong* means "Winning the Eyebrow" in the language of the lower Kurtoe region in Lhuentse district. It is still played by young boys especially during their leisure hours while looking after cattle.

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TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS, RITUALS, CEREMONIES, & FESTIVE EVENTS

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3.1. CEREMONIES

In the Bhutanese way of life, ceremony is the foremost and most important event in the onward proceedings of any activity. The ceremonies are performed both to formalise the activity and to ensure that its successful completion. A ceremony will consist of recitation of prayers or benedictions or at least utterance of propitious words. Since most of the ceremonies involve recitation of prayers, invocation of deities and gods constitute an important part. Therefore, ceremonies are somehow linked with religious activities. If there is a failure to perform ceremonies before the start of an activity or event, people feel that something is not right, as the perceived need for such a ceremony is firmly rooted in Bhutanese psyche and culture. Therefore, performance of an appropriate ceremony has become mandatory before the commencement of any activity held in the country, irrespective of time and place. However, these ceremonies must strictly adhere to auspicious astrological conditions. As a religious component is always involved, ceremonies are presided over by monks or *gomchen* (lay religious practitioners).

3.1.1. Traditional Ceremonial Reception

The literal meaning of *chibdre* is 'the procession led by the riding horse'. It is the traditional way of receiving important dignitaries as a gesture of honour and respect

appropriate to their positions and importance. Such dignitaries range from heads of state to religious heads and high-ranking officials.

The procession comprises monks equipped with their traditional orchestral instruments, namely trumpets, clarinets, drums and cymbals, which they play as they walk. The procession also includes a number of other participants such as *pacham* (hero dancers) and folk dancers in traditional costume, persons carrying auspicious symbols and substances, people carrying flags associated with deities, and a hierarchy of officials, bodyguards and attendants.

Depending upon the importance of the occasion and rank of the dignitary, *chibdre* is organised at three levels: elaborate (*gepa*), average (*dring*), and abbreviated (*duepa*).

During the *chibdre* procession for state level dignitaries, a separate group of monks on the rooftop performs *serdreng*, a ceremonious fanfare of trumpets, cymbals and other religious instruments, as an accompaniment. *Serdreng* symbolises an offering to the ears of the gods and goddesses. It is believed that it is the accumulated merits of the dignitary being received that make him worthy of such a high honour.



3.1.2. Wine Oblation Ceremony

Marchang or wine oblation ceremony is an offering of *changphue* or offering of wine to invoke the glorious teacher, the four assemblages of deities, the dakas and dakinis of the three realms, the dwellers of charnel grounds, guardians of directions, the local guardians (Kshetrapalas) and asking them to remove all obstacles so that the work may be accomplished successfully. On certain occasions, such as an elaborate chibdre ceremony, the marchang offering is performed twice. The first offering takes place outdoors at the end of the chibdre procession while the second offering is made during the *zhugdre phunsum tshogpa* (seated in the rows) ceremony as described below.

Performance of the marchang ceremony is not limited to specific places but is held anywhere depending on the nature of the programme — be it in the temple, residence, courtyard, or in an open ground. The marchang ceremony is in line with the traditional custom of presenting a guest with wine called *dongchang* in a container, the lip of which was decorated with three horns of butter (*yardron*) on the guest's first visit. This *dongchang* or marchang gesture is to wish the guest a long life and success in all his endeavours. So, the act of offering first to the deities and then to the honoured guest is clearly depicted in ceremonial presentation.

The verses for the marchang ceremony were composed by Kunkhen Pema Karpo in the 16th century. During the ceremony, in accordance with the recitation of the verses



by monks, the marchang is offered first to the lamas and deities, and then offered to the dignitary. After the marchang is offered to the guest, it is followed by the offering of a small white flag.

For the reigning monarch and the Head Abbot, instead of the white flag, the National Flag of Bhutan is offered. The offering of flag symbolises victory over all the negative forces, and increases fortune and luck for the people.

3.1.3. Zhugdre Ceremony

The phrase in Dzongkha literally means 'seated in the rows' whereby participants are seated in rows at the ceremony, which is called *zhugdre phunsun tshogpa*. The *zhugdre* ceremony originates from the tantric teachings of Buddhism and has been adopted to be performed during happy and auspicious occasions. *Phunsum tshogpa* means grace, glory and wealth combined to represent the three essences of happiness.

The ceremony begins with a general invocation to the higher beings that have helped shape the destiny of the kingdom and made it a land of peace and tranquillity. Their powers and blessings are sought for the acquisition of the triple attributes of grace, glory and wealth. The ceremony is held during important functions to mark such occasions as promotion, marriages, visits of high dignitaries and consecration and inaugural functions for new buildings and enterprises.

For the *zhugdre* ceremony, participants are seated in order of rank and seniority. The dignitary who is being honoured sits at the head of the row, usually facing all the participants. Once everyone is settled, different items of offerings are made first to the shrine and then to the dignitaries and participants. The first offering comprises the sweet root known in Bhutan as *droem* (in Sanskrit, *kesar*) and fragrant saffron water (*drizang*) and tea with saffron rice. This is followed by the offering of marchang and *chagap* (token money), and other food items such as *zhugdre* offering. *Zhugdre* begins with *doma* (betel nut) and *paney* (betel leaf) and then a fruit that grows on a tree high up from the ground to signify the importance of the occasion. The number of items can range from 11 to 21 or as many as can be afforded in terms of time and resource, but they must end in an odd number and with a hard item such as walnut or *chugo* (dried cheese) to signify indestructibility by malignant spirits.

Prayers are recited while the offerings are being distributed. In Bhutan, the beginning of *zhugdre* ceremony dates back to 1616 when Zhabdrung





Ngawang Namgyal, arriving from Tibet, was received with a zhugdre ceremony by Lam Druk Namgyal of the Obtsho family at a place called Lebnathang in Gasa District. Then at the consecration of Punakha Dzong, an elaborate zhugdre phunsum tshogpa was performed and the ceremony gained immense popularity thereafter. In order to receive what is being served during the occasion, participants are expected to bring their own *phop* (bowl) and *tora* (small piece of cloth, usually white, to receive food items) to the ceremony to receive what is being served during the occasion.

The final stage of the zhugdre ceremony, known as *trash moelam*, is a prayer for the good health, wellbeing and prosperity of the dignitaries and those present on the occasion. It is designed to help guests accumulate merits in order to attain the highest qualities of which man is capable, in this way benefiting not only those present on the occasion but also all sentient beings.

3.1.4. Consecration Ceremony

It is a custom that any significant structure or item is appropriately consecrated to grant a divine blessing. This is called *rabney*, which means to seal firmly. The ceremony is performed upon completion of a new or renovated structure, in order to assure its durability and resilience against natural and manmade disasters. It is a very special ceremony whereby constructions (such as temples, stupas and/or statues) are consecrated with wisdom energy bestowed from the Enlightened Ones, which is then absorbed into the construction

or object. This wisdom energy is sealed with prayers and meditations and the energy will remain alive and active until or unless requested otherwise. The *thangka* (religious scroll pictures), statues and stupas, which have been consecrated in this way, are considered effective in granting blessings and protection, and thereby fulfilling the wishes of the devotees. A lama or local priest performs this rabney ceremony. The most popular structures that are generally consecrated comprise private or public building structures or infrastructure, monasteries and temples, stupas, and statues. The ceremony is also carried out for the installation of prayer flags and prayer wheels. Besides these, Buddhist wall hangings, murals, and even new or second-hand vehicles are also consecrated.

3.1.5. Milk Libation

Cattle or yak owners perform milk libation to appease their local deities and livestock gods. Right after the milking, the person faces the direction of the local deities, holding the milking-pail in the left hand and a twig or leaves in the right hand. Dipping the twig into the milk, the person sprinkles a few drops of milk in the direction of the deity. During the act of sprinkling, the person says some propitious prayers. There are no standard written verses for the prayers: people just say some propitious words appealing to the deities that their animals be free from illness and animal predators, and that their produce be bountiful. The main prayer will be dedicated to the gods of livestock. It is in fact a thanksgiving to the gods for ending the previous day successfully and seeking their support in the days to follow.

3.2. TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

3.2.1. Religious Traditions and Customs

In the 7th century when the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo began building temples, Bhutan also saw the light of Dharma. In the 8th century, Guru Rinpoche visited Bhutan at least three times, gave the teachings and blessed the land.

During the 9th century, when King Langdarma and his Bonpo ministers were harassing the Buddhists and causing destruction of both monasteries and scriptures, many of the learned lamas came to Bhutan to practise in safety. In the 13th century, Phajo Drugom Zhipo established the root of Drukpa Kagyud tradition in Bhutan followed by his sons who continued the lineage after his death. Many other teachers followed him to strengthen the tradition. There were also Nyingmapa



lamas, among whom Pema Lingpa was the most notable figure.

However, with the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the 17th century, the dharma tradition had started to take shape. The Drukpa Kagyud tradition, having close affinity with the Nyingma tradition, was adapted to suit the sovereign independent status of Bhutan. Today, the Drukpa Kagyud tradition with its ordained monks residing in the dzongs, monasteries and institutions as well as the nuns, is Bhutan's state religion. The ordained monks and gomchens (literally 'great meditators') and nuns of the Nyingma tradition also complement the spiritual needs of the people of Bhutan.

Besides the Drukpa Kagyud and Nyingma traditions, there are minor communities, which practice Bon, Sakya, Gelug, Bodong tradition and Hinduism.

3.2.1.1. Life of Monks

The monks and monastic community in Bhutan play an important role in religious and cultural life of the different sections of society. In the past, each family enrolled at least one of their sons into the local monastery, so that monks constituted a considerable proportion of the male population. Although this percentage has declined with the passage of time, the roles of the monastic community have increased in recent years. The Head Abbot or *Je Khenpo*, who is responsible for the nation's religious affairs, holds a prominent place in the social and cultural life of the people. Five deputies or senior

masters assist him in supervision across the kingdom. Below them are the monks of other ranks with specific responsibilities.

A boy may be enrolled in the monastery at an early age, on an auspicious day. He starts to wear the maroon robe and his head is shaved. The novice receives ordination step by step, based on the monastic code of conduct specified in the Vinaya.

The curriculum begins with the learning of the alphabet, spelling and reading, and advances to the memorisation of prayers and other relevant texts besides observing daily monastic rules of discipline. They also learn various ritual arts, metrical rhymes, trumpet playing, making ritual cakes etc. As they proceed to higher classes, they learn grammar, prosody or literary science, in preparation for pursuing higher Buddhist philosophical studies.

After having gained a basic proficiency in religious studies from the monastic schools, the monks graduate to higher Buddhist philosophical studies. Besides emphasising liturgical, doctrinal and esoteric scriptures, monastic education also offers training in the auxiliary sciences and arts such as medicine, astrology, calligraphy, painting and grammar. The novice monk is eligible for full ordination only after the successful completion of a graded nine-year course. The entire period of study encompasses fifteen to twenty years. Needless to say, many whose abilities fail to meet the progressively higher standards settle for the lesser monastic grades, while the select few, in accordance with their accomplishments, rise up the hierarchical ladder.



The monk's education does not end with his gaining proficiency in Buddhist studies alone in the Buddhist colleges. After receiving theoretical teachings, he must undergo retreat for three years to practice meditation, called '*losum choesum*,' which means three years and three faces of a month (the first face from the 1st day to the 15th day which is known as upper-face, the second face from the 16th to the 30th, known as the lower-face. Choesum means a complete month – upper and lower faces – and the upper face of the following month, which makes one and a half months).

Performances of rituals on daily, monthly and annual basis are part of the normal monastic life. The monk must master different types of instruments including the trumpet, drum, clarinet and cymbals. Since almost every important occasion in the life of the average Bhutanese is coloured with religious significance, monks also visit households to perform annual rites for diverse occasions such as birth, marriage, sickness, death, construction of houses, promotion of senior officials, inaugural functions and many other day-to-day needs.

3.2.1.2. Gomchen

Gomchen literally means 'great meditator,' which clearly implies what they normally do. They devote their entire lives to retreat, moving from cave to cave, mountain to mountain and from forest to forest seeking the reclusive life, living in complete isolation in these areas. They are also called *tshampa* (one who stays in retreat). However, the concept of living such a reclusive life has largely faded away these days and the gomchen has now become a part of village life.

Therefore, the term *tshampa* took over the essence of gomchen, as a *tshampa* more or less solely dedicates



his entire life to retreat in caves or in monasteries, meditating and praying. As with gomchen, the term *tshampa* also refers to a meditator. A *tshampa*, however, has long hair and may be wearing a red striped scarf (*khamar kabney*). Both gomchen and *tshampa* receive their education from monastic institutions or from private tutors. *Tshampa* who achieve an advanced stage of meditation may be honoured with a *khamar kabney*, as a sign of higher attainments called *togdenpa*.

3.2.1.3. Alms Begging

Soe-nyom or alms begging is an activity of both a gomchen and a *tshampa*, as he or she (sometimes a nun is also *tshampa*) has renounced all attachment to property. Therefore, they beg only for sustenance rather than for accumulation of wealth. For the devotees, giving alms to such people is an opportunity to accumulate merit.

The great Milarepa has commented on this unique culture of alms begging:

*The Great Meditator who meditates in the cave,
And the benefactor (villager) who makes an offering,
Have an auspiciousness to attain enlightenment at the
same time,
And the auspiciousness of both come together in the prayer
of dedication.*

The hermit seeking alms will approach the threshold, and say or chant prayers, but some also use a drum, and sing along with the rhythm of the drum. Alms beggars recite excerpts from the Sutra of Boundless Life and Wisdom on Six Transcendent Perfections (*phar chin drug*) as hereunder:

*The Buddhas who are the strength of generosity are
perfectly sublime.
Lions among men, they have realised generosity's strength.
When entering the citadel of the compassionate ones,
The sound of the strength of generosity is heard.*

*The Buddhas who are the strength of discipline are perfectly
sublime.
Lions among men, they have realised discipline's strength.
When entering the citadel of the compassionate ones,
The sound of the strength of discipline is heard.*

*The Buddhas who are the strength of patience are perfectly
sublime.
Lions among men, they have realised patience's strength.
When entering the citadel of the compassionate ones,
The sound of the strength of patience is heard.*



The Buddhas who are the strength of diligence are perfectly sublime.

*Lions among men, they have realised diligence's strength.
When entering the citadel of the compassionate ones,
The sound of the strength of diligence is heard.*

The Buddhas who are the strength of meditation are perfectly sublime.

*Lions among men, they have realised meditation's strength.
When entering the citadel of the compassionate ones,
The sound of the strength of meditation is heard.*

The Buddhas who are the strength of wisdom are perfectly sublime.

*Lions among men, they have realised wisdom's strength.
When entering the citadel of the compassionate ones,
The sound of the strength of wisdom is heard.*

Hearing the call from the alms beggar at the door, the house owner will scoop up a *phueta* (traditional measure) of rice and present it to the hermit. No sooner are the alms presented, then the hermit will recite a dedication prayer as follows:

*Give alms and adhere to discipline,
Embrace patience and develop diligence,
Practice meditation and attain realisation,
Let auspiciousness be here and peace prevail at all times.*

With these invaluable generous words, the hermit will move on from door to door until he accumulates enough rations for his retreat.

3.2.1.4. Seasonal Migration

In the olden days, during the spring and autumn seasons it was customary to migrate between the lower and higher altitudes to avoid harsh wintry weather and hot summer climates. *Soethab*, therefore, refers to migration of high-ranking officials or a monastic body to their summer or winter residence, driven by the seasonal conditions. One such continuing tradition is the migration of the Central Monastic Body from Trashi Choedzong in Thimphu to Pungthang Dewa Chenpoi Phodrang in Punakha during autumn. The entourage headed by the Je Khenpo spends a night at Thinleygang Lhakhang and arrives on the first day of the tenth Bhutanese month in Punakha Dzong. After spending six months at Punakha, the entourage returns to Thimphu and spends a night in Semtokha Dzong. The monastic body reaches Trashi Choedzong on the first day of the fourth Bhutanese month and spends the next six months in Thimphu. During the migration, hundreds and thousands of devotees line up

along the road to receive blessings from His Holiness the Je Khenpo, the monk body and the sacred relics that are carried along with the entourage. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal instituted this tradition of maintaining a summer and a winter residence in the early 17th century.

3.2.1.5. Making Offerings

Since the foundation of Bhutanese culture and tradition rests upon the Vajrayana Buddhism, offerings to the Buddha, gods, and deities have become part of Bhutanese daily life. All Bhutanese make some kinds of offerings to the gods in the form of water, butter, smoke, or edible items. These items are offered before the Buddha and deities, represented in the form of statues and paintings, on the altar that is ubiquitous in all Bhutanese homes. The best chamber of the house is reserved as a shrine room for the Buddha and deities at which the following offerings are made irrespective of their social status.

Fresh Water Offering: Offering of fresh water is very popular. Every Bhutanese household offers fresh water in seven bowls on the altar. It is the cheapest resource available and a basic necessity for all living beings. While offering the water, one should pray for all sentient beings to be free from thirst. As the water is supposed to be clean without any contamination in the morning, fresh water is collected in the first morning hour for offering. The water is poured into the seven bowls, arranged in a straight row, from left to right if possible before sunrise and emptied in the evening before sunset. There are a few things to bear in mind while offering the fresh water: the bowls should be properly cleaned and placed in a straight row while the space between the bowls should be equal, about 5mm (equal to the space occupied by a grain of barley); and the bowls should be filled up to a level not lower than 5mm from the brim or not up to the brim. Offering water helps accumulate merits.

Butter-lamp Offering: This offering is made during auspicious days of 8th, 10th, 15th, 25th and the 30th of the month and on other auspicious days in accordance with the Bhutanese calendar. There are households who offer butter-lamps every day and night. In any case, butter is considered the best for offering, although it is widely substituted by various kinds of cooking oils. The butter-lamp offering is made in a chalice and there is no specific required number set for making the offering.

The chalice is cleaned with the help of mosses from the forest, which are considered very clean, but any piece of clean material will suffice. The clarified oil is poured into the chalice after fixing a strong wick in the hole. The



wick should be made of cotton and the fibre is twisted clockwise straight and tapering upwards like the tip of a needle. The chalice is placed before statues or religious items and then lighted reverentially. As one lights the lamp, one should pray that the lamp should multiply in millions and light the six realms and wish that all sentient beings in these realms are awakened and liberated from darkness.

Smoke Offering: The burning of incense is to drive away impurities besides it is an offering made to the gustatory organs of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Fragrant leaves such as juniper, cypress, mountain azalea, artemisia, and other herbal plants are collected, dried and then crushed into smaller pieces or into powder. The mixture is then burnt on the embers.

However, with the introduction of the stick incense, many more ingredients are now added to make the smoke more aromatic. In fact, the Bhutanese incense includes about a hundred precious aromatic substances like *nagi* (scale of pangolin), *giwang* (bezoar, intestinal stone), clove, musk, nutmeg, saffron, red and white sandalwood, and other medicinal herbs.

In making incense, the dried pieces of juniper wood are ground into powder with other herbs, ingredients and dyes, and then kneaded into a mixture. The mixture is then pushed into a hand-made wooden squeezer from which it is extruded in the shape of noodles. The incense

noodles are levelled in height, cut to the required size and dried for about five days in the shade before being packed into paper boxes to retain their perfume. In Bhutanese homes, incense is offered every day.

Food Offerings: Bhutanese think of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas above all other beings even while eating a small piece of food. Therefore, they offer foodstuffs firstly to the Buddha and deities before consuming them. Likewise, even at home, meals and tea are first offered at the altar as *phue* or first offering, before their consumption. This food offerings culture is firmly embedded in the everyday lifestyle of the Bhutanese.

After making the offerings, it is important to sprinkle a few drops of water (this is called *chab*), uttering 'Om Ah Hung' three times. It is an act of purifying the offerings made to the Buddha and deities. In Buddhist tradition, although material offering has values and benefits that is equivalent to its physical size and amount, it is believed that much more benefit and merit will accumulate from mentally emanated offerings. So, a mentally emanated offering or praising the virtuous deeds of others accumulates more merit than material offerings.

3.2.1.6. Hoisting of Prayer Flag

Another very popular activity of the Bhutanese is the hoisting of prayer flags with scripts printed on them. That is why beautiful places, mountains, hilltops,

treetops, cliff tops, riverside are festooned with multi-coloured prayer flags. In general, prayer flags are hoisted for the benefit of sentient beings, both living and dead, to boost one's positive energy or luck and to help liberate the souls of our loved ones. There are huge flags called *lhadar* in front of dzongs, each with a *gyetschen* (victory banner) on top.

There are also flags without scripts printed on them, such as a small white flag called *darchung* on the rooftop of one's house and *lhadar* near one's house that has just the print of four legendary animals on it. A *lhadar* with the printed images of the four legendary animals (tiger, snow lion, garuda, and dragon) is also hoisted in front of temples and dzongs.

The *darchung* on rooftops are placed during the annual religious rituals performed by the household, and hoisted in honour of the deities that the household worships. The *lhadar* showing the images of the four legendary animals is a sign that the temple and dzong contains scriptures like the Three Pitakas (sutra, vinaya and abhidharma). If the temples have *sertog* (golden pinnacles) on the roof, the victory banner pinnacle is permitted at the tip of the *lhadar*.

The prayer flags come in five different colours: blue, white, red, green, and yellow. The colour of the flag is determined based on the individual's birth sign represented by the five elements of the twelve year cycle — white for metal, yellow for earth, red for fire, green for wood, and blue for water.

The plain flags representing all the five colours hoisted on both sides of the path or road and around houses, or temples or pitched tents, signify important functions, celebrations of happy occasions and reception of dignitaries. They do not have any religious significance.

In order to install flagpoles, tall and straight young trees are selected, preferably from coniferous trees that are sometimes called *lhashing* (tree of the higher beings). Where *lhashing* is not available, other trees may be substituted, provided they are straight and meet the required height. After felling of the selected tree, bark, branches and knots are completely removed. *Sherab reldri* (wisdom sword) and *khorlo* (wheel) made of wood are affixed at the tip of the pole. The base of the *reldri* is shaped as crescent moon and sun and painted likewise, while the sword is painted bluish in the middle and reddish on the side to represent the sharp blade that destroys ignorance. A curved red line goes upward in the middle of the *reldri* to signify fire to boost the power of the blade. Lotus petals are painted on the part immediately below the moon to signify the purity of the base of the wisdom sword.



In rural villages where these elaborate preparations are not possible, the leafy tops of the branches are used as substitute for *reldri* and *khoro*. The *reldri* represents Manjushri, the wisdom deity; while the flag represents Avalokiteshvara, the deity of compassion; and the pole represents Vajrapani, the deity of power. Once a flagpole has been selected, it is considered unvirtuous for humans to walk over it, and therefore it should be kept with its tip on a higher ground.

The texts and images are printed on cotton cloth from xylographs available in temples and monasteries and with certain private individuals. In the old days, ink was prepared from soot mixed with water and very old *singchang* (juice of fermented grains) to give the required thickness and strength. The ink is spread over the printing block and the cotton cloth is stretched over the block, and rubbed over gently using a broad leaf. The print will appear on the cotton cloth. The manual printing is repeated until the desired length is achieved. The printed cloth is then attached to the pole with strands of bamboo, leaving a gap of 30 cm below the *khoro* and about a metre above the ground. Mantras are printed left to right across the width of the cloth and generally, while attaching the long strip of cloth to the flagpole, it is positioned so that the edge where the mantra begins flutters freely in the air, and the edge where the mantra ends is fixed down the length of the pole.

The flags commonly carry mantras of Avalokiteshvara (*mani*), Guru Padmasambhava (*vajra guru*), Manjushri, Vajrapani, Tara, Vajrasattva, Buddha Amitayus, *Lungta* (windhorse) and *Gyetshe tsemoi pung-gyen* (victory banner sutra). Finally, the flagpole is firmly fixed in the ground and then a consecration ceremony is held.

In most cases, high ridges and hilltops are considered ideal locations for prayer flags, because these sites provide plenty of the wind that is needed to flutter the mantra. Besides, hilltops give panoramic view of all the places below, and hence help to reach out the blessings of the prayers to all sentient beings.

3.2.1.7. Inner Relic

Statues, stupas and other religious structures are common sights in Bhutan. They are gorgeous to look at but without proper *zung* or inner relics, they have no spiritual values. If the statue is not filled in with the *zung*, it is believed that malevolent spirits get into the statue and cause harm to people. Therefore, installing *zung* in

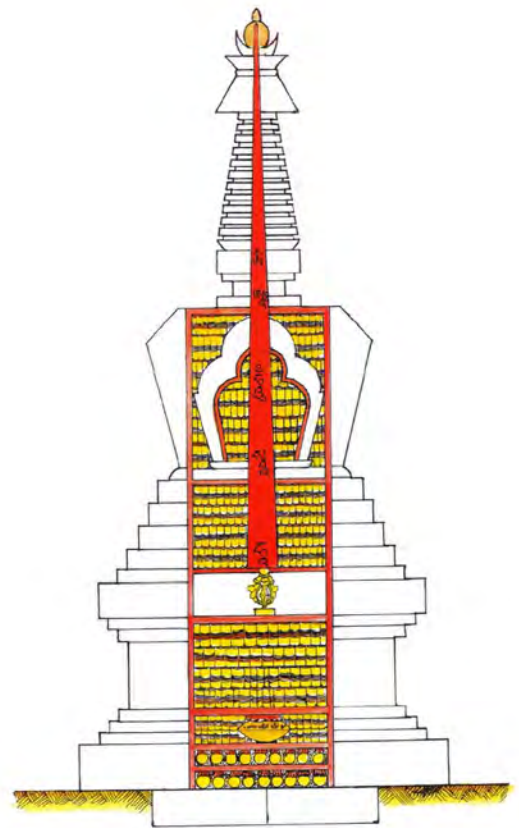
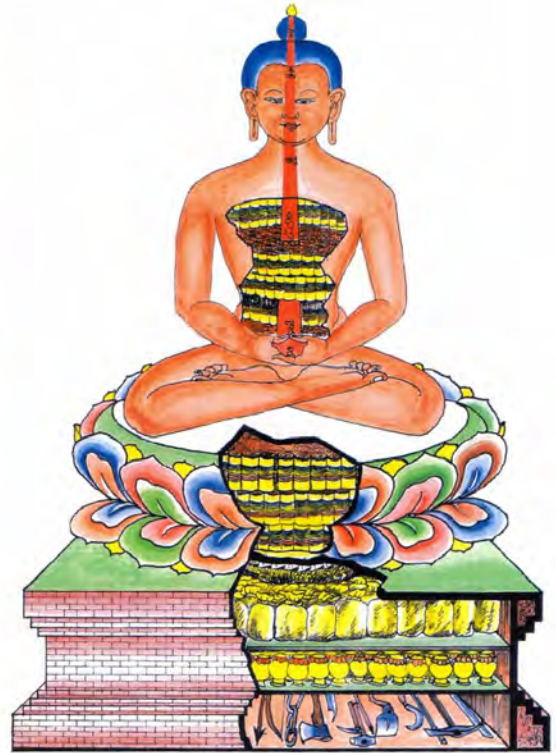
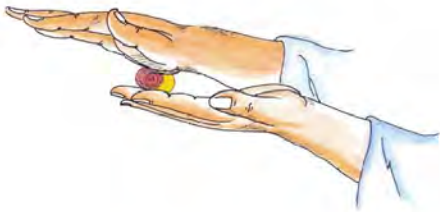
these structures is very important. With the installation of *zung*, the religious structure or statues become a living entity capable of bestowing blessings. *Zung* bestow them with spiritual importance and sacredness, hence inserting *zung* is tantamount to installing a soul in the body. Ideally, *zung* offering should be done by an ordained monk who does not eat meat, onion, garlic, drink alcohol, smoke or chew tobacco and has taken the vow of celibacy, but such a person is very rare to find in this modern era.

Zung consists of scriptures in the form of mantras or prayers, and precious objects, supported by a *sogshing* (life wood) in the centre. The *sogshing* must be a fruit-bearing tree with fragrant leaves such as juniper, cypress or sandalwood. It is cut into four sides tapering towards the tip while its base is kept in *vajra* shape. The whole *sogshing* is painted red and mantras are inscribed on the four sides in gold. The size of the *sogshing* depends on the height of the statue or stupa.

Mantra rolls are an important component in filling the religious objects. Thus, Holy Scriptures or mantras are printed and rolled but each roll is marked to ensure the right order of the scripts for installation, as Bhutanese believe that installing scriptures upside down may cause more harm than good.

Various other important components such as body, speech, and mind relics of great lamas, precious metals and a small statue (*terma*) are placed around the *sogshing*, which is then wrapped in silk brocade. After fitting the *sogshing*, rolls of mantras printed on papers and stuffed with sandalwood powders along with incense are arranged around it. The stuffed items will keep the *zung* items firmly in their respective positions. When every possible space is completely filled, the base is sealed with a bronze sheet. Finally, a consecration ceremony is performed to make the object fit for worship and refuge.

A *drengcha* is an insignia of the *kudrung* (discipline master) in the monk body. Outwardly, it is a sceptre, a whip to punish and discipline monks but inwardly it is capable of warding off defilements. It was introduced by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to discipline the young monks and to help them concentrate on their studies and other duties. Moreover, it was a method to avoid distractions from mundane life styles. It is believed that if a person gets lashings from this scourge, his or her sins or sickness will be cleansed because of the *zung* installed in it. Elderly people used to ask for a lashing from the *kudrung* to get cured from sickness and defilements.



3.2.1.8. Prostration

Prostration is an act of seeking refuge in the Three Jewels – Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Prostrations are made at sacred sites, structures, before highly learned lamas and statues. It is a submission of one's body, mind and speech to these entities. Moreover, it is a way of overcoming one's ego through humility and to be freed of negative karma, one might have accrued in the past and present lives.

In Bhutan, if a person is frequently sick and physically disabled, it is believed that he or she is experiencing the results of past bad karma. In order to get rid of these defilements, a lama advises his followers to do prostrations to help clear off the bad karma. A number of people who have done this have regained their health.

There are two types in prostrations – a long stretched prostration (changcha) and a short contracted prostration (kumcha). In changcha, the whole body is laid down flat on the ground stretching both the arms in the front. In the kumcha, the 'five limbs' – two knees, two palms, and the forehead touch the ground. It is also referred to as 'five-point prostration.' When one touches the ground with the five limbs, one should be mindful and visualise that the five poisons or negative emotions are being destroyed and eradicated. The five poisons are ignorance, attachment, anger, jealousy and pride, all resulting from ego.

Before prostrating, and while facing the right direction where one is going to prostrate, one needs to take care of several principles and physical gestures:

- a. think that one is in the Buddha field and not on the earth;
- b. fold hands together in the shape of a lotus bud;
- c. put the folded hands on the head, throat and then at the heart and think one is submitting the body, speech and mind to the object;
- d. do the prostration with the five limbs touching the ground;
- e. recite the refuge mantra all along;
5. when one prostration is done stand upright once, before the next prostration; and
- g. think that all sentient beings are prostrating together chanting the mantra filling the universe with the combined voices.

One should envisage receiving blessings from the body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. Similarly, one should also pray that the prostration help cleanse all the defilements and

sins committed by body, speech, and mind of oneself and others alike.

The mantra for refuge is:

*I take refuge in my Guru,
I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the Dharma,
I take refuge in the Sangha,
I take refuge in the Triple Gem, the perfect refuge!*



3.2.1.9. Custom of Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a journey made to some place of spiritual significance to a person's personal beliefs or faith. The notion of pilgrimage is strongly embedded in Buddhism, and Bhutanese of the older generation aspire to start a journey on pilgrimage to as many places as possible in their lifetime. Bhutanese visit holy places and sites to accumulate merit and purify negative karma. This comes from their belief in the principle of 'cause and effect' and rebirth. Thus, it is a virtue to engage in virtuous actions for the benefit of others. To support the above principles, there is a popular maxim that says:

Look at the present life and you will know what you have done in your past life.

Look at your present actions and you will come to know what would be your next life.

This maxim has an impact on the lives of Bhutanese people. So people try to visit as many sacred places as possible during their pilgrimage to accumulate merit. Although most people are tied to their farms to sustain livelihood, they do not miss any opportunity to go on pilgrimage both inside and outside the country whenever their time permits. Bhutanese people seldom travel outside as tourists to visit amazing places and meet people for fun and enjoyment, but rather, they travel to holy places to pay their respects and pray to make their next life happier, and also to pray for all sentient beings.

3.2.2. Agrarian Traditions and Customs

3.2.2.1. Agricultural Practices

As Bhutan remained under self-imposed isolation for several centuries, modern economic development made its way to this country very much later than in many other countries. Agriculture is still the main source of livelihood for a large majority of the population. More than sixty percent of the people still live in rural villages tilling their land and raising livestock. Farmers generally use traditional methods of farming and homemade tools, but increasing

numbers are beginning to use modern technology appropriate to their individual farming needs.

Bhutanese farmers grow nine basic varieties of cereal grains – wheat, barley, paddy, maize, bitter buckwheat, sweet buckwheat, pulse, foxtail millet, and finger millet. These are grown at different places and times, depending upon the altitude and season. The most dominant crop is rice followed by maize and wheat. Due to the introduction of new farming technologies and growth in market opportunities, farmers are venturing into commercial crops such as oranges, apples, cardamoms and potatoes. Commercial gardening of chilli, cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, and asparagus is also undertaken nowadays.

Traditionally, when farming works are due, a suitable day is sought from the village astrologer for ploughing and sowing of seeds. Days coinciding with animal signs such as Ox, Tiger, and Sheep are avoided when oxen are used in the fields. Similarly, days bearing the signs of Rat, Rooster, and Pig are avoided for sowing seeds. Nevertheless, farmers generally stick to the *throejor-throecheen* and *throechung*, which are combinations of two of the five elements according to astrology.

Every farmer aspires for a good harvest in any season. Therefore, the very first step is to gather stubble and twigs, which are then burnt in the field. Thereafter, manure is collected from cowsheds and scattered in the fields. The farmlands are ploughed with the help of a pair of male animals – oxen or yaks yoked together. In the eastern region, two men are required to guide the oxen with one at the yoke and the other holding the





plough. In order to encourage the animals, some farmers sing inspirational songs called *Lang ke* or *Lang kor*.

*Please come, my Dongkar,
Listen, with your golden ear,
Concentrate your mind.
Please come, my Yangcha,
Even if my voice is not soft as wool,
Prove that you are as strong as iron.*

*Come on, my Dongkar,
The breakfast that we have eaten this morning,
It is vanishing as the sun passes the midpoint.
Come on, my Yangcha,
Without having worked ahead,
It is hard to leave the results behind.*

*Come; turn on, my Dongkar,
The time has come for the sun to set behind the mountains,
You have to complete one more round of work.
Come; turn on, my Yangcha,*



*After successful completion of one more round,
The repressing yoke will be removed from your neck.*

Maize is the first crop to be sowed, right after the New Year celebrations. It is followed by paddy and other crops depending upon the elevation of the land. The maize seeds are thrown directly into the hollows of the soil as the ploughing is in progress. Unlike other crops, rice involves several cycles of attention and is the most tedious of all crops for cultivation, requiring constant irrigation and frequent weeding. Seeds are sown in separate nurseries in early spring and seedlings are transplanted during the monsoon season.

Both maize and rice are harvested between September and October. While harvesting the paddy, a beautiful song seeking high production is sung as follows:

*Please shower, shower with prosperity!
The white-headed mother of prosperity,
Please bring productivity and [your] first offering.*

*Please shower, shower with prosperity!
The yellow-headed mother of prosperity,
Please bring productivity and [your] first offering.*

*Please shower, shower with prosperity!
The red-headed mother of prosperity,
Please bring productivity and [your] first offering.*

*Please shower, shower with prosperity!
The green-headed mother of prosperity,
Please bring productivity and [your] first offering.*







3.2.2.2. Preparation of Organic Manures

Farming in Bhutan emphasises organic methods as a government policy, which is widely supported by the farmers. Preparation of organic manure is not a new concept as farmers have been practising this in the past. Raising cattle has been a part of a farmer's life in Bhutan for a number of reasons. They are the source of dairy products and also meat, they provide power for tilling the land and they provide organic fertiliser in the form of manure.

People collect dry oak and pine leaves from the forest and withered meadow ferns from open areas using a *kotra* (rake with metal prongs and a wooden or bamboo handle) and sickles. The leaves are collected in the winter season when deciduous trees have shed their foliage. The leaves are carried in baskets while the long, withered fern fronds are bundled together with ropes. Generally, the women take turns to help each other, which makes it possible for them to go in groups to do the job. The dry leaves are spread out in the cowshed layer after layer over many days. As the cattle are kept in the sheds at night, the plant products and cattle droppings get mixed together over the course of time. The decomposed leaves are then taken out and piled in heaps of up to 3 metres high. This compost is then scattered over the field to help the soil regain its nutrients for the next round of crops.



3.2.2.3. Shifting Cultivation

Tseri or shifting cultivation is sometimes known as 'slash and burn' cultivation. *Tseri* was practised when households did not have enough grains to last the whole year. Farmers would cut down shrubs and bushes or dig out turf in the meadows on pieces of land kept fallow during the winter. The dry winter weather helped dry the felled vegetation, so that it was ready to be burnt in the spring. In the ashes of the burnt vegetation, the farmers sowed millet, buckwheat or maize according to preference as supplementary crops. Most often large areas were registered as *tseri* in a farmer's land record, but it was also normal to use government lands.

In the interest of conserving the natural environment, this practice has now been discontinued as a policy, except where there is a shortage of other permanent cultivated fields in remote areas of the countryside.

3.2.2.4. Restrictions to Enter Hillside

Ladam or *ridam* is a customary law enforced by a community to prevent harsh and destructive weather conditions particularly when the harvest season is just round the corner. *La* means pass but it implies the mountain areas surrounding a village, and *ri* means forest hills especially in the upper part of a village, and *dam* means restriction or prohibition. Therefore, *ladam* or *ridam* means restricting villagers from entering the hills and restricting visitors from wandering into the mountains, passes and forests.

The belief is that the mountains and hills are the abode of *tsen* or mountain deities who are very sensitive to any mischief such as desecration of the area or setting fires or cooking something unusual or making loud noises. Such mischievous deeds are said to ignite the anger of the deities, causing them to send heavy rains, hailstones and stormy winds that destroy the crops.

Hence, the community restricts everyone from entering the areas in order to avoid disturbances to the deities. This customary law is enforced by the communities, which in some places may impose the restriction from the time the seeds start sprouting until the harvest is over.

3.2.2.5. Custom of Observing Auspicious Day

Observing Auspicious Day is strongly driven by the Buddhist precept of 'not doing harm to life.' Since farming involves tilling and digging the earth, numerous



insects are killed: they are brought up to the surface or buried deep into the earth inadvertently causing harm to their lives. So, days like the 8th, 10th, 15th, 25th, 30th and other holy days of every month in the lunar calendar are considered *duezang* (auspicious day) and any non-virtuous deeds carried out on these days will result in manifold karmic consequences. Therefore, farmers try to observe duezang on these days. Instead of farming activities, people attempt to visit monasteries, temples, and sacred sites to offer prayers to accumulate merits. Even if people are not able to make a pilgrimage to a sacred site on an auspicious day, they avoid harnessing their oxen and tilling the soil. Duezang is known by the term *sa-nyen* in some communities.

3.2.3. Animal Husbandry

3.2.3.1. Nomadic Herders

Livestock is an important part of agriculture in the country. The residents of high elevation settlements have limited arable lands, so they rear herds of yaks or dzo-dzomo (cross-breeds) and sheep to supplement

their means of livelihood. The herders of these animals are part of family groups domiciled in permanent homes in highland settlements where they grow high altitude crops. The herders move with their animals from place to place for most part of the year, but remain well connected to their families at home. That is why they are basically not nomads, but rather, semi-nomads. In the winter, when it is too cold to remain in their villages, the families travel with the herds down to low-lying valleys. However, a few members of the family also move to lower altitude villages to trade their dairy products with cereals, which they then transport to their highland homes. Some of the highlanders have enough cereals to last the next ten to twenty years. Pastureland or rangeland is very important for these semi-nomads to sustain their herds of animals. To avoid intrusions onto the pastureland by stray animals before moving in their own herds, the herders must guard the area for months to make sure that there is enough forage for their animals to graze. The health and produce of their animals are directly linked to the availability of forages in the pasturelands. They build sheds with stones, wood and bamboo for the herds and bamboo or wooden





pens for the calves. But *bja*, meaning yak hair tent, is commonly used as it can be carried with them as they move on. It is important that the herd and the camp move to another pasture on an auspicious day, which is decided in consultation with an astrologer.

There is a certain altitude below which yaks cannot survive. Consequently, pastures in lower valleys are often not available to yaks for grazing. However, the yak and siri cattle cross-breeds called dzo and dzomo can survive at altitudes of about 1200 meters above sea level in winter.

3.2.3.2. Dairy Production

When calves are allowed to roam freely with the mother, yaks and other breeds are milked once a day in the morning. But sometimes calves are weaned in their pens so that the cows can be milked twice — once in the morning and then again in the evening. There are different customs practiced in different parts of Bhutan, particularly in Merak and Sakteng communities, where yak calves are allowed to forage with their mothers while calves of dzomo and other breeds are weaned and even culled to increase milk production.

There is a beautiful song associated with milking in accordance with the legend of Thöpa Gali:

Now, to give an account of four ways of milking a yak:

*When three spring months have approached,
My [Thöpa Gali's] yaks are tended in the valley down there.*

*The white-tipped mixed-colour limb-fastening-rope is fastened,
My yak is milked like water in abundance.*

*When three summer months have arrived,
My yaks are looked after on the hills up there.
My yak is milked like curd [thick milk].*

*When three autumn months have advanced,
My yaks are tended in the great paddock down there.
My yak is milked like butter [very thick like butter].*

*When three winter months have come,
My yak does not produce even a single drop of milk.
The mixed-colour limb-fastening-rope is kept at the camp.
Now, the yearly wind blows outside,
The time has come when water stored inside the tent turns to ice.*

Now, this concludes four ways of milking a yak.

Milk provides different by-products: churning the milk produces butter and cheese in general, but some people make cream cheese and whey-cheese, which is further processed into fermented-cheese and dried-cheese. In order to make churning less monotonous, a song is sung in the Merak–Sakteng community of eastern Bhutan:

Now, to describe the three-word song on churning the milk:

Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!

*Ah! At dawn this morning,
I offered the milk libation of a hundred yaks, which were milked.*

*Not a single drop of saliva has drooled from the mouth,
Not a single drop of mucus has dribbled from the nose,
No filth has dropped from the hands.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*Do not let the milk fly into the air,
Do not let the milk leak from the end of the churn,
Do not let the milk leak from the middle of the churn.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*When I draw up the churn-stick,
It is like elevating beings to the path of heavenly liberation.
When I thrust down the churn-stick,*

*It is like suppressing cyclic sufferings of the lower realms.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*Let the churning give yak-head sized butter,
Let the churning give sheep-head sized butter-flecks,
Let the churning give horse-head sized cheese.
Let there be enough to offer presents to lamas,
Let there be enough to give presents to high-ranking officials.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*Let there be enough to make offerings to lamas,
Let there be enough to give alms to beggars,
Let there be enough to feed myself,
Let there be enough to give to people.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

The three-word song on churning the milk is completed.

In order to have superior breeds and higher milk production, breeding is quite important in animal husbandry. Most breeding takes place in summer and normally the young ones are born in the spring. Once breeding is decided by the herder, a close watch is kept to avoid inferior breeding. In some cases, a cloth piece is used to cover the rump part of the cow to avoid disturbance from other inferior bulls.

3.2.3.3. Culling

Koe, a dwarf cattle breed, results from crossbreeding of *goleng* (bull) and *dzomo*, a hybrid of yak and cattle. *Dzomo* gives the highest quantity of milk amongst the highland animals. *Dzomo* also lives longer than lowland breeds such as *jatsham*, which give the highest quantity of milk amongst local breeds, and jersey cows, which give the highest quantity of milk amongst imported breeds. In order to obtain the most out of *dzomo*, normally its offspring, the *koe*, is culled one week after its birth. The female *koe* gives very little milk while the male *koe* is not strong enough for use as a pack animal. Only one or two *koe* with very good skin colours are spared for conserving the breed of *goleng* and *golengma*. The meat of the *koe* is considered very special. This is common practice in Merak and Sakteng in eastern Bhutan.

In the autumn season, people also cull the fattest yak for *shanor* (animal meat for consumption: *sha* means meat, *nor* means animal). The *shanor* is often undertaken by an individual household or by combining two or three households depending on the availability of healthy yak as well as demand for the meat. This practice is to stock up one year's meat provisions as well as to buy grains





from lower altitudes. Shanor is done when butter and cheese stocks are not sufficient for consumption by the household. Besides milk and its by-products, culling gives the highlanders sufficient meat for their own consumption as well as some for sale in the market.

At the time of shanor the entire family moves out of the village and camps at the site with enough provisions for a few days. Sunny days are chosen for the shanor event to allow the meat to dry. This was an annual practice in Merak village but the custom is slowly dying out.

3.3.3.4. Castration

Castration is an important activity in animal husbandry. It helps to control the spread of inferior breeds and also helps to maintain animal health especially for pack animals. Besides, uncastrated bulls are extremely difficult to look after during the breeding season. However, the traditional castration method is a delicate and dangerous task and may cause death to the animal.

While castrating, the animal is laid down in recumbent position with its belly facing the sky, so as to give easy access to its genital parts. The limbs are tied and held

firmly to avoid accident. In the traditional method, only simple equipment is required: a razor-sharp knife and a piece of woollen thread. The operator gets hold of scrotal sac and with the razor-sharp knife, the operator cuts one-third of the lower scrotum. This exposes the testicles and are gently pulled out and removed. Some ointments are then applied to the wound and the scrotal sac is tied with the woollen thread. In some cases, it is left untied and the animal is released. Castration is easier on younger animals as the spermatoc cords are tender and easily severed while pulling out the testes. It is also less painful for a younger animal and the wound heals faster. Spring and late autumn or early winter are the best times of the year for castration as there are fewer insects around then, and hence there is less chance of the wound becoming infected. This method of castration is applicable only for oxen, yak, ram, and dzo.

Castrating a horse is more difficult as the testicles tend to recede into the body. The horse is laid down, and the testicles are firmly held in the hand, and then tied with the help of V-shaped wooden tool to avoid the possibility of them slipping back. Then a sharp knife is used to make an incision in the centre of the tip of the scrotum to expose the testicles, which are then pulled

out. The spermatatic cords are severed and the testicles are thrown away. Post-castration procedures are the same as above.

3.2.3.5. Shearing

The next major activity in the highlands is shearing. Before it is shorn, the sheep's legs are tied together and it is laid on the ground. The shearer cuts the wool off, tuft by tuft, with a knife, taking about half an hour to shear each sheep. Yaks are not laid down prior to shearing, but their forelimbs and hind limbs are tied and they are tethered by their horns. When shearing yaks, the soft hair is pulled out by hand while the coarse hair is clipped with scissors or cut off with a knife, from the dewlap to the abdomen and the tail.

Although the time of shearing slightly differs from place to place, yaks are shorn once a year in the late spring, while sheep are shorn three to four times a year starting in spring.

3.2.3.6. Custom of Sparing Animal Life

Saving the lives of animals, or *tshe-thar*, is considered a virtuous deed. The life forms of all sentient beings are believed to be interconnected through the continuum of time. Thus, all living beings of today could have formed part of our own personal ancestries in the past. In philosophical terms, this concept is often expressed as them being the rebirth of our mother during infinite times in the past. Whether they have been our mothers or not, we must respect every living being irrespective of size and species, as all would find it hard to bear the pain of being killed. Therefore, saving an animal at the time when it was about to be butchered is considered a virtuous act. Although an animal cannot express this outwardly to us, the escape from the near death situation must bring an immensely gratifying relief. The saved animals, especially bovines, are left to roam and graze freely in the forest, where they are guarded by someone paid to protect them. Spared from slaughter, they are left to roam until they die natural deaths.

Another form of saving an animal's life is called *tentsug* or *tsheddar*. The animal is offered to a particular deity as a riding pony. The animal is kept in the herd but forbidden from being put to use for any purpose such as a pack or riding animal or from being shorn with metal instruments. Tentsug is offered to deities to appease them and in return, animal herds and owners are protected from unforeseen harms and epidemics.

3.2.4. Social Customs

3.2.4.1. Regulation of Social Manners

3.2.4.1.1. Etiquette

Driglam denotes 'order, conformity and uniformity' while *namzha* refers to 'the principle'. Hence, *driglam namzha* means abiding by the principle of living in harmony and in pure forms concerning physical, verbal and mental behaviours.

Every society has its own code of discipline in order to regulate human conduct, enabling people to live together as civilised human beings. The Bhutanese code of *driglam namzha* covers a wide range of social norms. These include speaking, eating, drinking, walking, sitting, dressing, relationship, patriotism and gratitude. It is a way of showing gratitude for the benefits one has received from parents, leaders, elders and spiritual teachers. These distinctive social customs have been carefully maintained and preserved over generations by our forefathers. Today, they are deeply rooted in our society and remains as an insignia of our cultural identity.

Precisely, *driglam namzha* involves action, speech and thoughts. Accordingly, it can be described as follows:

1. Physical Etiquette (*lueki driglam*): It means conducting oneself through the body. This covers the conduct of eating, drinking, walking, sitting, seeing, dressing, showing respect, and physical gestures.
2. Speech Etiquette (*ngagi driglam*): It means conducting oneself through speech. This covers speaking the truth, speaking gently and politely, speaking in a respectful way, and saying words that are beneficial to others.
3. Mind Etiquette (*yiki driglam*): It means conducting oneself through the mind. This covers faith in the Three Jewels (Tri Ratna, that is, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), dedication to work, loyalty to the country, good intentions, showing kindness and gratitude, and trust in the cycle of karma.

Among the three aspects of *driglam namzha*, mind etiquette is the most important of all because the mind influences and controls our actions and speech. It is through intelligence that human values can be analysed, understood, appreciated and followed. Therefore, to rectify our thinking and have the right attitude is most important. Thus, mind etiquette plays a vital role in the person's maintenance of quality and decency.





3.2.4.1.2. National Costume

Gho and Kira

The national dress for men is *gho* and *kira* for women. Gho is a one-piece outfit pulled up to knee-length and fastened with a belt called *kera* at the waist, leading to formation of an enormous pouch across the belly. Men's belt is a striped hand woven textile using plain cotton or wool on a card loom. It has fringes at both the ends.

Kira is a rectangular ankle-length robe wrapped around the body, tied at the waist with a wide woven belt, and fastened at the shoulders by a pair of shoulder brooches called *koma*. A necklace-like chain called the *jabtha* holds together the pair of *koma*. *Jabtha* also makes an attractive ornament. Women's *kera* is made of cotton woven on card looms with intricate silk designs of varying colours. Elderly women wear the broad *kera* in three folds. The female *kera* has also fringes at both the ends. The weft thread used is commonly thicker than the base fabric used.

Women also wear a *toego* (short, loose jacket) over the *kira*. *Toego* can be made from any kind of material and

be in any colour. Women also wear a garment called *wonju* under the *kira*. Commonly made from silk or polyester, the *wonju* is a loose, wrap-over long-sleeved blouse.

The semi-nomadic herders of the high valleys of Merak, Sakten and Laya and some other ethnic communities do not traditionally wear the *gho* and *kira*. They have a unique dress, lifestyle and language, and their own weaving specialty.

In an effort to preserve and promote cultural heritage, all Bhutanese are required to wear the national dress in government offices, schools and on formal occasions.

Necklace

Traditionally, a necklace is also a part of the costume of a Bhutanese woman, and a woman who is not wearing a necklace is considered to be incompletely attired. Therefore, women make it a point to wear necklaces, especially during celebrative occasions. When a woman is dressing, she puts on her necklace at the very end, to complete the outfit.

Necklaces of precious stones are passed down from mother to daughter. A traditional Bhutanese necklace consists of a string of beads of various stones such as coral, turquoise, onyx, pearl, agate, and many more. The necklace may reach almost to the waist. If the woman is very rich and possesses many precious stones, she will choose to wear more than one necklace at a time. Since public gatherings and celebrative occasions provide formal platforms for display of wealth and/or position in society, women make it a point to wear as much as they possess.

Sword

For hundreds of years Bhutan suffered from territorial invasion as well as internal strife and civil war, challenges which were countered by our *pazaps* (militia), and senior officials. In earlier times, those who performed well in battle were awarded a sword in recognition of their show of courage, valour and success.

Once the monarchy was established those officials who served the king and the country with utmost dedication and patriotic zeal were awarded *pata* (sword) and red scarf (*bura marp*) in recognition of their selfless service. Awarding *kabney* along with *pata* is, therefore, the sole prerogative of the monarch. The awardee is then addressed as a '*Drasho*', which literally means 'the best'



as they are exemplary people. Therefore, this award symbolises secular responsibility — the preparedness to fight any enemy harming the interest of the *Tsa-wa-sum* (the king, the country, and the people) and to safeguard the country and its cultural traditions.

Kabney

When Gautama Buddha administered vinaya rules at the first sermon, the five chief disciples first wore kabney as a mark of respect to the Buddha. Later, when Guru Rinpoche visited Bumthang in the 8th century and sowed the seeds of faith in the dharma, he instructed people not to take the lives of others, and gave *ge-nyen* vows (vow of lay devotee). He instructed his devotees to wear *rezen* or kabney as a sign of their having become followers of Buddhism or taking precepts. While dharma practitioners wore red coloured kabney as a mark of following the dharma teachings, ordinary people wore white coloured kabney as a mark of safeguarding the country — their secular duty.

Today, we wear kabney as a part of our national dress in accordance with the code of driglam namzha. The smaller scarf worn by women is called *rachu*.

Kabney is a large, fringed scarf (about 90 by 300 cm), which is worn with one half placed over the left shoulder and the other half drawn across the back, below the right arm and across the body, then caught in a loop made by folding the lower part of the left end over it and then throwing the left end over the left shoulder. When the kabney is correctly placed, the right side should loop down at equal level to the hem of the gho, and the two sides should come together at the left breast. There is considerable variation in how the kabney is actually worn, but what is written here describes how it should be worn.

Bhutanese at all social levels wear kabney as a part of formal wear along with the national dress, gho. Wearing kabney marks respect for sacred objects and higher authorities, and symbolises the position or rank of officers serving in the government.

Scarves worn by women in place of the male kabney are called *rachu*. These much smaller, colourful, decoratively woven scarves can be worn draped over both shoulders with the two fringed edges falling from the chest, or can be folded in half and placed over the left shoulder with the fringes falling from the chest. Women in general wear *rachu* by making a fold in the centre and placing the *rachu* over the left shoulder.

Besides kabney and *rachu*, there are other variants used by religious practitioners. Those worn by lams and monks are called *zen* or *rezen* and the one worn over their *rezen* is called *choe-gho*. The *rezen* is worn all the time over the robe but the *choe-gho* is worn only during special religious occasions. Similarly, the one worn by *ngagpas* (tantric practitioners) is called *ber* or *dagam*; and the one used by *togdenpas* (adepts) is called *rey* or *rekar* and *khamar*.

Kabney and *rachu* are worn to pay respect to sublime masters or leaders, and to sacred objects enshrined in the dzongs, monasteries and temples. They are also worn as a symbol of official position. The colour of the kabney determines the official rank of the bearer.

Traditional Boot

Bhutan's traditional footwear is a kind of boot worn as high as the knee, the upper, cloth part of which is then held and tied by a narrow strap below the knee. *Dra-lham*, *thru-lham karchung* and *tshoghlam* are three different types of traditional footwear and form an important part of Bhutanese national costume.

Dra-lham are worn by the senior monks in the monasteries. They are similar to *tshoghlam* but red in colour. *Thru-lham karchung* derives its name from the white colour of the *ben* (section just above the ankle) which is highly visible from a distance. The traditional boot worn by the general public is called *tshoghlam*.

The *thil* or sole of the boot used to be made from hard leather, but these days *tshoghlam* usually have rubber soles. Above the sole, two layers of red and white leather (or rubber) make the *drilden*. Above the *drilden* is the *ri karchu*, on which comes the *ben* in different colours. The *ben*, is yellow, orange, red, blue or green according to the official position of the wearer. Yellow *ben* is reserved only for the king and the head abbot (the Je Khenpo); orange is for ministers, red is for senior officials, blue is for members of parliament (both houses) and green is for the general public. The cloth part above the *ben* is generally black or blue silk brocade.

It is mandatory to wear *thru-lham* or *tshoghlam* as a part of formal national dress during any formal occasions.

3.2.4.1.3. Law

Two sets of codified laws — the religious and the secular — were instituted during the Zhabdrung's time. The 253 monastic rules taught by Buddha in the vinaya



pitaka formed the main part of the religious law. The secular law was mainly based on the prevailing social and behavioural norms in the country, drawing on appropriate excerpts from the Buddhist principles of *lhachoe gewa chu* (The Ten Divine Virtues) and *michoe tsangma chudru* (The Sixteen Human Principles).

The codes were formulated in such a way as to organise in a Buddhist perspective the relationship between the Drukpa Kagyud tradition's monastic community, representing the state, and lay patrons and subjects in the judicial and financial fields. Equality before the law was always emphasised. All sections of society, from highest to lowest, were bound by the same laws and none was exempted from penalty for committing any form of criminal act. This code of laws was put into strict observance by the first desi (regent), Tenzin Drugey (1591-1656, regent 1651-56) giving rise to the well-known aphorism that 'The spiritual laws resemble a silken knot which appears light but gradually become tighter and tighter, whilst the temporal laws resemble a golden yoke which grows heavier and heavier.' These laws of enduring value, handed down to us from earlier times, form the framework for Bhutan's present judicial system.

3.2.4.2. Life Cycle

3.2.4.2.1. Pregnancy and Baby Shower

According to our conventional wisdom, once a woman stops menstruating, and starts vomiting in the morning as well as experiencing loss of appetite, she is pregnant. Henceforth, she avoids doing any heavy work, and elders and experienced people advise her on the dos and don'ts of birthing-related subjects. Although pregnancy was socially acceptable for a woman who had a husband, there was a social stigma against unmarried pregnant women. Not only did people gossip behind their backs, but some communities even ostracised them on the pretext that their pregnancy outside marriage would cause accident or disaster to the people, animals and community, especially if they happened to pass through any restricted areas such as ladam or ridam (see above under 3.2.2.4.). Although no nasty actions are taken against unwedded pregnant women these days, they are still the subject of gossip, and social stigmatisation persists, though perhaps to a lesser degree now than is mirrored in the well-known traditional saying:

If the bastard is faced to the rocky cliff, the cliff breaks down.

And if the bastard is faced towards the lake, the lake dries up.

Although due date for the birth could not be predicted precisely, impending birth is determined based on the size of the abdomen and frequency and intensity of labour pains. As soon as childbirth seems imminent, the woman readies herself by preparing *ara* (distilled wine) or *changkyoe* (fermented rice) as well as stocking up with other nutritious foods such as meat, egg and fish. She also avoids crossing the tethers of horses, as it is believed that this will delay birth, since pregnancy in mares lasts about a year. Besides, roaming or journeying at night is strictly forbidden. When it is time, a few elderly women will be called to assist the pregnant woman, as it is also believed that it will be easy to give birth if there is an experienced woman nearby.

If the woman is in protracted labour, various methods are followed to aid her in delivering the baby, such as: opening a container of fermented rice (*phafin*, also known as *buchang*) and serving it to her; a family member going to a cross-section of paths and stamping the ground hard three times, collecting the dust from that spot, and then rubbing it on the abdomen of the expectant woman; or her brother (*phuga ajang*) dresses up and covers his body with a *lhiu* (rain coat made from yak hair) and then, carrying a quiver and holding a bow in his right hand, he jumps across the abdomen of his sister who is lying on the bed. These are some of the popular practices claimed to have saved pregnant women from suffering further.

After delivery, the child is picked up by the kindest and most gentle person present, as it is again believed that the new-born will take on the character of the person who first picks the baby up. Once the child has been picked up, its umbilical cord is cut with a sharp knife or a scissor. The child is washed with lukewarm water and welcomed by inserting a piece of butter in the mouth, placing another piece on the head, and uttering many good wishes and prayers for his/her long life. While the child is being washed, the mother awaits expulsion of the placenta. The placenta is buried in the ground, placing the umbilical cord towards the surface. However, in some cases the placenta is taken to a river and pressed under a heavy stone with the umbilical cord turned upstream. Either way, if the umbilical cord is not placed correctly, it is believed that the child will vomit. After washing, the baby is allowed to suckle at the mother's breast either before or after expulsion of placenta, and following that *ara* and nutritious foods are given to the mother.



However, if placental expulsion does not occur, a *rundi* (kind of flat rope made from bamboo, used when carrying loads on the back in Tshangla Community) is cut in half and burned. The ash is given to the mother to eat. In some cases, the cast off skin of a snake (*buesop*) is fed to the woman. People believe that these practices will help the body expel the retained placenta.

As the birth of a child is considered impure, outsiders will avoid visiting the family for three days after the birth. After three days, where possible, a lama or *tsip* (astrologer, or lama who knows astrology) is invited to the house to perform a purification ritual called *lhabsang* and define the child's horoscope and bestow a name. Following this, well-wishers and neighbours will visit, bringing a ceremonial scarf and a pitcher of ara, a small amount of dried meats, eggs or anything else that is considered valuable to the weak and recuperating mother. The next very important function for a child is the first cutting of hair, which can be done at any suitable time after the hair is long enough. The practice is that the first haircut is done by a brother of the child's mother, or in some cases (for example if she has no brother), it may be done by a lama.

3.2.4.2.2. Matrimonial Customs

Marriage is considered a sacred ritual to bring together two independent individuals into a unit for the rest of their lives. In the old days, marriage by love was problematic, rare and went through much scrutiny. Therefore, choosing a life partner became not just the parents' prerogative but the choice was confined mostly to one's own blood relations due to strong influence from the so-called extended family members. Consequently, various marital practices were held in communities of Bhutan. *Tshangla* speakers in the east preferred inter-cousin marriages (*serga khotkhen mathang*) without much celebration; Doyas chose a maternal uncle's son (*azhang gi tshaw bomoi thobthang*) for marriage; and people of Mesak — Merak and Sakteng — were known for child betrothal (*chungnyen*) and arranged marriage, while the Nepali speaking communities in southern Bhutan preferred marriage within their own or an equivalent caste. Other ethnic groups also arranged marriages in similar fashion but love marriage was very rare.

Generally speaking, a system of dowry is absent from the traditional Bhutanese culture, but dowry remains, to some extent, a component of marriage amongst the more traditional Hindu communities in southern Bhutan. Both polyandry and polygamy were permissible in earlier times, but there were very few who followed these practices.

Once the matrimonial knot has been tied, heredity inheritance of land, house, animals and other valuable properties comes into effect. In the east, the male children inherit the land and houses while in the west it is the opposite. However, the formal codification of property inheritance law in the modern era is likely to result in fairer and more uniform practices across the country.

3.2.4.2.3. Custom of Kinship

The culture of extended family has led to relatives. Of all sections of the society, *tshangla* speakers have the richest terminology for kinship. Hence, *tshangla* terms are used in the following chart of kinship nomenclature:

Tshangla	English
Pepe	Great Grand Father
Ubi	Great Grand Mother
Meme	Grand Father
Abi	Grand Mother
Apa	Father
Ama	Mother
Apchi	Paternal Uncle (father's elder brother) & husband of Amchi
Aku	Paternal Uncle (father's younger brother) & husband of Azem
Amchi	Maternal Aunt (mother's elder sister) & wife of Apchi
Azem	Maternal Aunt (mother's younger sister) & wife of Aku
Ajang	Maternal Uncle & husband of Ani & Father-in-law
Ani	Maternal Aunt & wife of Ajang & Mother-in-law
Waktsa	Children
Za	Son
Zamin	Daughter
Ata	Elder Brother & elder male cousin from Apchi & Amchi and Aku & Azem
Ana	Elder Sister & elder female cousin from Apchi & Amchi and Aku & Azem
Kota/Boning	Younger Brother & younger male cousin from Apchi & Amchi and Aku & Azem
Usa	Younger Sister & younger female cousin from Apchi & Amchi and Aku & Azem
Tshau	Nephew
Tshamo	Niece
Khotkhen	Male cousin from Ajang & Ani and Brother-in-law
Mathang	Female cousin from Ajang & Ani and Sister-in-law
Makpa	Husband
Miwaktsa	Wife
Jaro	Friend

Based on the above kinship terminologies, the relations emerging from marriage are also confined to the same terms as stated above: *ajang* for father-in-law and *ani* for mother-in-law, *khotkhen* for brother-in-law and *mathang* for sister-in-law. The relationship is not limited to paternal and maternal family members, as relations through marriage are equally considered as family members. Brothers of father-in-law are called *ajang* while sisters of mother-in-law are called *ani*. The elder sister of father-in-law is called as *amchi* but his younger sister is *azem*. Similarly, elder brother of mother-in-law is *apchi* while her younger brother is addressed as *aku*. The relationship extends further afield, also.

3.2.4.2.4. Old Age

During old age, Bhutanese people like to devote their time to spiritual activities. The preferred option is to go to an isolated monastery to say prayers from the text if one has learnt earlier, or chant mantras like *mani* or *vajra guru* and others. The next option is to live with their children but visit religious centres and/or attend initiations and teaching sessions whenever possible. The last option is to stay at home to help their children in minor chores and often babysitting. In short, aged people find greatest solace in religious activities like circumambulating stupas and temples, participating in religious activities, reciting mantras and going on pilgrimage.

Traditionally, Bhutanese have lived in extended families where the bond is much stronger and where both old and young receive the much needed love and care. The economically active members also benefit from the presence of old parents and young children in their day-to-day activities. Older parents prefer to live with daughters, rather than with sons, as they grow old.

However, modern development, rural-urban migration and the urban lifestyle have started to change the

traditional way of life, and nowadays the trend is towards living in smaller family units in urban areas. Further aggravated by the contrasts in outlooks on life, elderly people are now left behind tending to domestic chores in villages while younger, western-educated generations regard farming outdated and physically arduous work.

3.2.4.2.5. Funeral Customs

In Bhutan, there are several funeral practices as mentioned below:

1. Cremation of dead body at cremation ground or near one's own house or on a river bank;
2. Sky burial, where the body is placed on a mountaintop for vultures to consume;
3. Water burial, where the body is immersed in the river and weighed down with heavy stones, or else cut into small pieces which are then scattered in the river;
4. Ground burial, where the body is buried underground;
5. Cave burial, where the body is deposited or hidden in caves on cliff faces; and
6. Surface burial, where the body is buried above the ground but covered with a structure made of stones and plaster.

Cremation is the most common practice throughout the country. People prefer to cremate the body of a family member at a charnel ground, which has been prepared in accordance with the mandala of Buddha Akshobhya, and consecrated and blessed by highly attained lamas. The Hindus in the southern foothills



cremate their dead on riverbanks so that the ashes and remaining debris are easily disposed of in the river. People in Merak and Sakteng communities dispose of dead bodies in the river or else bury them underground, while in places like Lingzhi the dead bodies are left on a flat stone at a higher elevation for the vultures. In the Lhop community, the dead body is buried above the surface of the ground within a stone mound which is plastered to make it air proof.

Where cremation is practised, dead children below the age of eight are not allowed to be cremated. In olden days, they were either taken for sky burial on high mountaintops where vultures could feed on them, or they were buried in the river, weighed down with heavy stones to prevent them from being carried downstream. Sky burial is discouraged these days, however.

In the event of a death, it is of utmost importance to seek divination from an astrologer before disposing of the body. Based on his ruling, various religious and charitable activities are organised in the name of the deceased. The main purpose of such activity is to accumulate enough merit to speed up his or her next rebirth as a human. Failing to accumulate enough merit will lead the deceased to be reborn into one of the four unhappy states of existence below the human plane. The virtuous person will either take rebirth as a human being, or be reborn in the pure realm of a Buddha field, from which they may travel the path towards enlightenment without falling back into the lower realms.

The Buddhist tradition of funeral rite continues for 49 days after death. Aspiration prayers for the deceased are recited and rituals performed almost daily by those who can afford it, depending on the availability of monks or gomchens and nuns. Those who cannot afford daily rituals, must at the very least initiate the *droda zhip* on the 4th day since the death, *duen tshi* on the 7th day, *chuzhi tshi* on the 14th day and *nyishu tsachi* or *gewa* on the 21st day and finally *zhipchu zhegu* on the 49th day for performance of *kangsha* (prayer rituals) to the various forms of Compassionate Buddhas (*mithrugpa* and *chenrezig*), without fail. The family also conducts a ritual at the first anniversary after the passing away of the person, but for those who can afford it, the anniversary ritual can go on up to any number of years from the third year onwards. Relatives and intimate friends will try to attend all the rites including the annual rites, but people from the community will prefer to come mostly during the last two days (i.e. 21st and 49th days since the death).



Following the funeral rite, a *drigo* (meaning, an effigy or a photograph of the deceased) is kept in the corner of the shrine room and offered meals, butter lamps, tshog (other forms of food), fruits and drinks every day, starting with the first day of passing away, until the 21st day rite, after which the *drigo* is removed. This is because the soul of the deceased is thought to hover around the body instead of leaving to seek the path of liberation.

After cremation, any remaining fragments of bone are collected from the cremation site, then ground into powder, mixed with clean mud and made into tshatsha (mini stupas). These are laid in caves, on ledges of cliffs and at other sacred sites before the 49th day. One hundred and eight prayer flags printed with the Chenrezig mantra (*om mani padme hum*) are hoisted for the deceased, in order to benefit all sentient beings. Customarily, the six-syllable mani mantra would be sung melodiously with heartfelt devotion by those present at such rituals, but the practice is slowly diminishing, either because people nowadays do not know the tradition or because it is coming to be seen as obsolete. Even in remoter areas of the country, the tradition is no longer very strong.

3.2.4.2.6. Rebirth and Reincarnation

Buddhism expounds and accepts the concepts of rebirth and reincarnation. And also Buddhism recognises six realms of existence of which human is considered best since humans have the potential to achieve a better future through practising dharma, and all but gods do not have this opportunity. Following on from this, Bhutanese consider all living beings to have potentially been our parents at some time or other during our sojourns in the six realms of existence (or samsara). Although there is nothing we can do to stop death, we humans have the ability to change our futures for the better by engaging in virtuous deeds in our present lives. It is believed that those who have led virtuous lives take rebirth at a higher level and thus will enjoy more richly satisfying lives with greater opportunity to help others on their own samsaric paths, whereas those who pay no attention to moral values will sink to lower levels in rebirth, thus losing the opportunity to work at their own salvations.

Rebirth prospects may be enhanced if sufficient merits are accumulated through religious and charitable activities in the name of the deceased person, but of course much also depends on the kind of life the deceased person had led. However, it is important and a merit-worthy activity in itself, to do what one can to ease the wandering spirit of the deceased and help it on its way to a better or at least not inferior rebirth.

Reincarnation, where the spirit of the deceased takes up residence in the person of a newborn, is accorded only to spiritually great figures. The reincarnation of a spiritually realised practitioner is confirmed from the behaviour of the very young child tentatively identified as the rebirth. The child will speak about his or her past works, and act in the manner of the deceased person. Besides, the child might repeatedly describe and talk about places and people from the past.

Renowned lamas have been known to have the psychic power to forecast their rebirths before passing away, but this is very rare. Based on such a forecast, a reincarnation may be recognised. To verify recognition of a reincarnation, the child *trueku* (reincarnated one) is shown belongings from his previous life together with similar items, and asked to point out which are his. If the child identifies these correctly, he is confirmed as the reincarnation. The child reincarnate is accorded full liberty to continue his previous works, to own the properties of his previous existence, and to lead the life of reincarnated individual, but of course, though a reincarnate, he is still a child and will have much to learn before he reaches the level of his former powers. Through the reincarnation identification tradition, works of the past are continued into the next life.



3.2.4.3. Household Customs

3.2.4.3.1. Family Structure

Bhutan's family structure must be seen in its historical perspective. Bhutan became a unified state only in the 17th century and remained a totally agrarian society up to the third quarter of the 20th century. Though sparsely populated, our small, mountainous, landlocked country was to a large extent protected from the unwelcome interest of outsiders by the inhospitable terrain, but there were numerous acts of bullying from powerful neighbours in the north and south. The Tibetans launched as many as 13 invasions, a few of which were highly destructive. Later, in the 19th century, there were skirmishes against the British in the southern border regions leading to a major but brief conflict in 1865, after which friendly relations resumed. However, in spite of all this, our forefathers had kept foreign rulers at bay.

Following unification, there was a long period of internal strife fuelled by ambitious and power-hungry leaders in different regions. With such a small population, Bhutan could not afford to have manpower tied up in a regular army. Militia forces were established in the various districts, and when the call to arms came, the *pazaps* (warriors) would leave their farms and assemble for duty. A large number of men lost their lives in the ensuing conflicts, while many were away from their families for long stretches of time as the end of one battle gave rise to yet another. Building of the nation also meant that important administrative infrastructure needed to be put in place: dzongs had to be built (through a system of beneficiary labour contribution, or *wula*) to guard the valleys, goods had to be collected and transported, and messages had to be delivered between officials living in different places. All these difficult assignments required the strength and courage to overcome the rugged terrain, spending long periods under harsh conditions often with minimal shelter. Men, rather than women, had to bear these burdens. With their men so often away, the home-based women often became de facto heads of the family, running the domestic side of things and also organising and participating in the farming work.

With the 1907 establishment of the monarchy came a gradual change in the social roles where women's contributions in nation building were enhanced. This process was accelerated once modernisation got under way in the 1960s. The modern economic development programmes required intellectual capability as much as physical strength, and the western model of education

that taught the language of modern technological development gave equal access to girls and boys. However, old habits die hard, and the long rooted social structure of men playing a more external and public role while women were primarily engaged in domestic responsibilities has continued to persist to some extent. The age old belief that women should take care of children, look after aged parents and engage in domestic chores, as *nanggi aum* (mother of home) still prevails in many social circles.

Despite policy reforms regarding gender equality and ratification of international conventions on equality, women still lag behind in many affairs. However, on the day-to-day level, relations between the sexes are quite evenly balanced. The trend is for women to put themselves forward more in the public arena these days, and seek more active and public participation at both community and national levels. Bhutan's new generation of educated youth does not think any difference should prevail between male and female, in terms of opportunities to work and rights. This new development in mind-set gives reason to believe that achieving equality in Bhutanese society is not very far off, as there is also an inherent belief that women and men are equal as human beings.

3.2.4.3.2. Dining Custom

Zacha drosom means the manners including dining manners, and is part of the physical aspects of driglam namzha described above in this chapter. The meal is served when all the family members are seated along with the eldest members of the household. Hierarchy is observed in seating, with the exception that the youngest one is allowed to break the rule by sitting next to anyone he/she favours.

All the members are seated in a circular fashion with the pots and pans placed in the middle but closer to the mother. Alcoholic beverages (*ara*, *bangchang*, or *singchang*) are served to the adults (but not the children) before the meal begins. Since dining is a solemn affair, it is considered respectful to maintain silence while eating the meal. Mother or the eldest daughter will distribute rice and curry and tea, or any non-alcoholic drinks, serving the oldest person first and the youngest last. No one eats until the food has been offered to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, the family and village deities, and wandering spirits such as hungry ghosts. The offering prayer is normally initiated by the head of the family or a monk (if present), and is made whether the meal is grand or simple.



In villages, there is no set protocol for receiving guests, but there are annual family and community rituals. Guests usually bring items like rice, meat, *ara* or *singchang* which are received by the mother or whoever is the lady of the house. Guests are served with *suja* (butter tea) followed by a cup or so of *ara* or *bangchang* (fermented grain heated in water but not boiled) as preferred. Village traditions of feasting are not the same everywhere in Bhutan. There are variations in the manner of organisation from region to region.

Everyone should remain seated until the elder members have finished eating, and then the younger ones — both boys and girls — should stand quickly to remove the dishes and cutlery. The family discusses its plan of works and other important matters at the meal gathering, which children are expected to listen but not participate.

3.2.4.3.3. Feast Custom

The custom of organising a feast is common in Bhutan. There are several occasions when large numbers of guests are gathered for dinner or lunch in a family home or a village temple or in a bigger monastery. Although the primary reason is linked with 'giving away alms' as a part of the six perfections, it is not the direct and sole reason for gathering the crowds. People gather together for annual *tshechu* festivals, propitiation of local deities, annual family rituals, and birth of a new baby. The other solemn reasons are for 21st day and 49th day rituals following the demise of a person. People usually take advantage of such gatherings to carry out the virtuous offering of food alms.

Social gatherings may also be sponsored by the monarchy, which may be a continuation of the noble tradition of kings giving food alms to common people in ancient times. Other dignitaries also organise parties to celebrate promotion and so on. Social gatherings may also be held just to give families and individuals to meet and socialise. On happy occasions, dancing and drinking of alcohol follow the meals and can often go on until the next morning. Such parties provide young people with an opportunity to socialise with their peers and to make the acquaintance of older people who they can take as role models for adult life.

Likewise, the feasting custom is sometimes transformed into a picnic. As mentioned above, each picnic will have religious, social or family significance and its own special identity. The picnickers pack their food in traditional bamboo containers, assembling everything in a bag or basket along with a bottle of drink, and carry everything off with them to their picnic spot. Selection of the picnic spot is predetermined in accordance with the purpose of the gathering, except for private or family picnics. Drinking, singing and dancing will follow the picnic event, after all activities formally scheduled for the gathering have been successfully carried out.

3.2.4.3.4. Custom of Dunchang

Drinking alcohol with one's family and friends is a common phenomenon in villages of Merak and Sakteng, but tea is also served according to one's preference. Therefore, tea and alcohol are the elements of bonding and socialising, symbols of trust and cohesion, solidarity and interdependence in the community. Putting together a pitcher of *ara* each, irrespective of whether one prefers to drink alcohol or tea, they congregate in one house and share the drinks. After a few rounds of servings, the mood for singing and dancing is heightened, filling the atmosphere with real party-inspired melody. The party can go on until everybody agrees to call off the programme. By then, most of the participants will be too drunk to find their way home. Such a gathering is called when friends and family members meet each other after a long time.

3.2.4.3.5. Custom of Chamchang

Quarrelling and trifling fights are common in communities, especially among close neighbours, and



often lead to serious frictions and disharmony. In such a situation, neighbours and village elders come together to initiate reconciliation. Here too, the people of Merak use alcohol, calling it *chamchang* for this purpose, to rebuild the disrupted harmony.

The causes of disharmony between two individuals or among the neighbours or families in Bhutan can vary from matrimonial affairs to property disputes and petty matters like use of improper language at each other and accidental harm done to one another. Such non-criminal matters are often settled within the village community called *nangdrig* or *nangkha nangdrig*. Village elders like the *gap* (village leader) or someone else of influence

who deem it as their social responsibility to prevent disharmony in the community, take the initiative to bring the aggrieved parties together for a settlement. Sometimes the affected members themselves request such people to negotiate on their behalf. In certain communities, *chang* is shared between the opposing groups or individuals as a sign of reconciliation.

3.2.4.3.6. Custom of Tshokchang

Tshokchang is a popular custom in the eastern part of Bhutan and is normally presented to a guest as a sign of respect. Village people, usually women, come in a group along with a pitcher of wine, a few eggs and some rice to pay respect to the guest, either along the way, or wherever the guest is staying. Once seated, *tshokchang* will be placed before the guest and then one by one, the owner of the wine will serve the guest. People prefer the guest to taste all their wines if possible. In some communities, women will insist that the guest tastes the drink she has brought as her gift. After the guest has been served with a few cups, others present will also join in the drinking.

Tshokchang is also presented during an archery match. Village women will flock together at the archery range, each carrying a pitcher of wine or kettle of tea. They will prepare some space to sit near the archery range. As the archers come and take their seats, the women will present the *tshokchang* to the archers and then one of them will serve the beverage. The custom is that the guest or archer has to drink at least two to three sips as a sign of accepting the offer. *Tshokchang* is usually followed by singing and dancing. At the end of the session, the guests or archers leave some cash to reciprocate their kind gesture.

3.2.4.3.7. Greeting and Seeing-off Customs

The receiving of guests at a distance before they reach their destination is an age-old tradition in Bhutan. Sumptuous meals are prepared along with tea or alcoholic drinks. Both the guest and the reception party enjoy the meal together and continue on their way. This tradition called *suwa* before arriving at home has now all but disappeared in most parts of the country due to motor road connections, which take the guest right up to the village. Nonetheless, the custom continues at the national level for the receiving of dignitaries, and elaborate preparations are made in the case of His Majesty the King and members of the Royal Family, and His Holiness the Je Khenpo. People from the village normally make a point of offering



tshokchang especially to the Royal Visitors, and the ministers of the entourage. Separately visiting officials are also welcomed in this way but with less elaboration.

Likewise, guests are also accompanied some distance along the way when they depart. In the family or the village, seeing off the guest takes place at the point where the transport service is available. However, the official seeing off is as elaborate as the reception, at about the same distance from the place of residence.

Apart from His Majesty the King and members of the Royal Family and His Holiness the Je Khenpo, alcohol is an important item to serve both at the reception and see-off points. *Chawang char* is to unfold the kabney and bow down to receive the VIPs as the main host offers *khadar* (auspicious silk scarf). The reception party should be formally dressed for the occasion. At the time of seeing off, the hosts unfold the kabney and bow down as a sign of respect, but do not present *khadar*. In traditional Bhutanese custom, the oral greeting of '*kuzu zangpo la*' is used among people of equal rank and not to dignitaries higher than oneself. Similarly, no words of farewell are used while seeing off, except that the departing dignitary may say a few words of appreciation.

Some *soelre* (gift, usually in the form of cash) is left in appreciation for the tshokchang or hospitality offered by the people or a household. Formerly, people

waved to each other with *khadar* until the departing guests were no longer in sight. However, this custom has also disappeared because of travel in motor cars. Nonetheless, at the point of departure, a friendly well-wishing song is exchanged between the two parties as follows:

People who are leaving:

*The high sky is on the other side of the pass,
While the sun is on this side of the pass;
Because of the distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The sun is all set and going,
While the high sky will remain behind;
If the sun is definitely leaving,
Please take the high sky along with you.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are leaving:

*The high mountain is on the other side of the pass,
While the snow lion is on this side of the pass;
Because of the distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The snow lion is all set and going,
While the mountain will stay behind;
If the snow lion is definitely leaving,
Please take the mountain along with you.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are leaving:

*The beautiful meadow is on the other side of the pass,
While the stag is on this side of the pass;
Because of the distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those left behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The stag is all set and going,
While the beautiful meadow is staying back;
If the stag is definitely leaving,
Please take the beautiful meadow along with you.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are leaving:

*The serene lake is on the other side of the pass,
While the golden-eyed fish is on this side of the pass;
Owing to distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those left behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The golden-eyed fish is all set and going,
While the serene lake is staying back;
If the golden eyed fish is definitely leaving,
Please take the serene lake along with you.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are leaving:

*The solitary monastery stands on the other side of the pass,
While the venerable lama is on this side of the pass,
Because of the distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those left behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The venerable lama is all set and going,
While the solitary monastery is staying behind;
If the venerable lama is definitely leaving,
Please take the solitary monastery along with you.*

*Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are leaving:

*The majestic fortress stands on the other side of the pass,
While the powerful ruler is on this side of the pass;
Owing to long distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The powerful ruler is all set and going,
While the majestic fortress is staying back;
If the powerful ruler is definitely leaving,
Please take the majestic fortress along with you.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of staying behind flourish.*

People who are leaving:

*The peaceful hamlet is on the other side of the pass,
While the benevolent parents are on this side of the pass;
Owing to the long distance, we could not meet last year,
Yet it made us happy as we could meet this year.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

People who are staying back:

*The benevolent parents are all set and going,
While the peaceful hamlet is staying back;
If the benevolent parents are definitely leaving,
Please take the peaceful hamlet along with you.
Let the wishes of those leaving be fulfilled,
And let the fortune of those staying behind flourish.*

3.2.4.3.8. Custom of Gathering Grains

Brukor and *Tokor* mean the same thing, that is, collection of *bru* (grain) or collection of *to* (food grains). The highland settlers of the east use *brukor* while the highland settlers of the west use *tokor*.

The highlanders fill their stores with various types of grains, mostly rice and maize. Some households even have grain stocks as old as 20 years as one does not need to worry about insects at high altitude.

During the summer, the highlanders are busy tending their animals while farmers in the lower altitude villages are busy with crop farming, but during the autumn season when farmers harvest their crops, the highlanders come for *brukor* or *tokor*. They normally take loads of raw incense leaves, butter, dried cheese, fermented cheese,



meat, hides, wool, and all sorts of animal products to exchange for grains. Normally their transactions are barter system, though cash transaction is also common in order to buy necessary items such as salt, sugar, and tea leaves that are imported from India. The highlanders transport these goods on horses, yaks, dzos, and oxen and also carry them on their own backs. The caravan will range from a few to over 20 pack animals walking in line along the tracks, halting at nights where there is enough grass and water for the animals.

Over the years, this custom has led to a special bond between the highland dwellers and lowland farmers known as *naep* (host/guest). Following the harvest in winter, the highlanders visit the lower altitude for *brukor* and become the guests of the farmers, while in summer, the farmers visit the highland pastures in search of butter and cheese and become guests of highland hosts. In the central districts, the highlanders also take care of the flocks of sheep belonging to the low altitude farmers from April until the Blessed Rainy Day in the autumn, receiving a measure of grain for each animal by way of exchange. The highlanders store their grains with the host family until all of it has been carried up to their highland homes, which may take some months. They do this with complete trust that the quantity will remain correct, to the last grain.

However, this tradition is now almost lost in some parts of the country, since the yak products are easily traded for cash in the urban centres where alternative accommodation is now easily found. Moreover, the modern market has everything that a highlander needs to buy with cash. The liberalisation of cordyceps collection has also increased the purchasing power of the highlanders. In the central districts, sheep culture has

disappeared from the landscape.

3.2.4.3.9. Restriction Sign

When a woman gives birth to a child or a person is seriously ill and should not be bothered by frequent visitors, a signpost known as *tshamshing* is erected at the gate. It is a branch (preferably of a pine tree) fixed at the entrance with a white scarf hung from it. This indicates that one cannot visit the house for the meantime. The restriction remains until the family sees fit to remove it. This custom is also disappearing.

3.2.4.3.10. Custom of Voluntarism

Khelang, which means voluntarism, has been a common phenomenon in the Bhutanese countryside. During the construction of a house or the hectic farming season, especially rice plantation season, village people contribute labour free of charge. The beneficiary provides food and drinks but no wages. In return for the help, the host makes a reciprocal contribution at a later date. Such customs of reciprocity of favour embedded in the traditional way of life serve to ensure that mutual support is provided in times of need. For example, when there is a death in the family, the entire village contributes both labour and food items to help ease the burden on the bereaved family.

Community service facilities such as schools and basic health units have also been built through voluntary labour with the government providing the building materials, and also covering wages for employment of skilled labour for carpentry, painting, masonry and plumbing and electrical fittings. This tradition continues in many of the rural communities.

3.2.4.3.11. Traditional Transportation

For transportation of goods, called *keldren*, people used animals such as oxen, yaks, dzos, mules and horses. However, usually people themselves carried the goods, as porter ponies were not available to most households. Goods were packed to the size of *do-tshe* (standard load weighing up to 30 or 35 kilos) in various types of containers depending upon the kind of goods. Grains would be packed in sacks woven from nettle fibres and later jute sacks, textiles and cloth items were packed in cane baskets or *buendri* (a large square wrapper made from cotton or nettle fibre), some kind of items were packed in wooden boxes and milk products were packed in baskets with broad leaves inside.

Carrying a load on one's back together with necessary rations while walking on rough tracks was a hard life. For the most part, finding suitable resting spots was also problematic. Therefore, the porters brought along a T-shaped walking stick called a *toma*, which they rested their loads on to ease the strain on their backs and shoulders when taking a brief halt. Porters would set out with their loads in the cool hours of early morning, resting for brunch during the peak of the midday heat. They would pause after every twenty or so steps while walking and rest briefly against the *toma*, then set off again on their way. There was no distinction made between men and women except that usually women would carry lighter loads.

Men travelling light would wrap what was necessary in one end of the kabney, placing the load on the back over the left shoulder. They would then bring the long end under the left arm and around the back to cover and support the baggage, bringing it up over the right shoulder and knotting it at the front to the part that went under the left arm. A woman would put her bag at her back, then wrap her *rachu* across it, bringing the two ends forward around the shoulders and knotting them in front. Cane baskets called *tseu* and *zem* were also used for carrying luggage. In some communities the weight of the load is borne on the head while in other places, shoulders bear the weight.

The monk or gomchen carry their loads in a backpack called *keza khushi* while on a long journey. It is a specially designed cane frame joined together by cloth. Garments and rations are arranged inside the backpack and books are placed on the top, while other belongings such as cooking utensils are hung from the sides. These days, it is rare to see either a person carrying *keza khushi*, or a porter carrying different kinds of loads, because of motor transport facilities.

3.2.4.3.12. Custom of Pulling Heavy Loads

In the absence of machines, the lifting and dragging of heavy loads was a huge burden on men in the past. Yet, they had still managed to put in place pillars, beams and frames in the main structures of dzongs and lay stone slabs in the courtyards of these imposing fortresses, feats that are unimaginable these days. Often strongmen called *nyagoe* or *masang* were called upon to execute the works. In the absence of such people, other techniques were utilised to get the best out of the available workforce. In order to consolidate and coordinate the individual strengths of the group members, wise elderly people used inspiring verses and chorus to encourage and coordinate the effort, so that all pulled or pushed together as one. In course of time the singing of such verses (often humorous) became popular during any work that require collective effort:

Come One! Come Two! Come Three!
If the ropes are coarse,
It is the hands that bear the brunt,
Come on! (At which everyone pulls or pushes.)

Come One! Come Two! Come Three!
If the high officer's hand has no peace,
It is a hell for the servants.
Come on!

Come One! Come Two! Come Three!
If the master has no knowledge,
It is the students who get the lashing.
Come on!

Come One! Come Two! Come Three!
If there is a loose husband,
It is troublesome for the mother and children,
Come on!

In this case, there are no standardised verses, which were composed and written down. These verses are chanted by witty people who compose them on the spot, based on the situation and the type of work. Such extempore chanting serves to both amuse and further motivate the group so that it gives its collective best to the work.

3.2.4.4 General Social Practices

3.2.4.4.1 Carrying a Pocket Knife and a Cup

There is an old maxim:
Keep knife and cup with you at all times,
For it is uncertain when one will encounter wine and trouble.

This custom of carrying a cup wrapped in tora and a knife tucked in the belt was essential in the early days. One was not expected to ask for a spare cup at the time of taking a meal, or when one was offered wine or some other kind of drink. If a person failed to carry this item, he or she would certainly be left watching when others ate, and would have to forego any offer of drinks. Similarly, a knife was an essential tool, as one often had to pass through wilderness, camp in a strange place, or encounter an unexpected situation.

People in Merak and Sakteng strap their knives to the belt over the left hip while those in other valleys keep it tucked in the belt but concealed inside the pouch between the layers of the gho. Some keep it exposed outside the pouch. These are smaller knives of about 35 cm long, but a larger knife called *ringme thungme* (neither long nor short) is usually slung at the right hip.

In the villages, women carry a crescent-shaped knife called *zou* (or *zorba*) tucked in the back of their belts with its long handle within reach of the right hand. However, instead of the *zou*, women in Merak and Sakteng carry a penknife called *nyukdri* suspended from their right hip by a chain of precious coins joined together with small rings.

3.2.4.4.2. Betel Nut and Betel Leaf

Doma paney is a combination of areca nut, betel leaf and a little paste of lime. Although the combination was

scarcely available in Bhutan earlier times, it now occupies an important place in our culture. Many Bhutanese — irrespective of age, gender, occupation or social status — enjoy chewing doma paney. It acts as an icebreaker for chitchats, serves as a gift of friendship between individuals, is an indispensable item on auspicious occasions and for some individuals the chewing of doma paney has become a regular daily habit that is very hard to break. Among the Hindu community in the south, doma paney is offered as an invitation to important occasions.

Bhutanese link this custom with the visit of Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century when the inhabitants were blessed and ordained with *ge-nyen* vows to refrain from killing animals and consuming their meat and blood. In the 17th century, Zhabdrung Rinpoche received gifts of betel nuts and leaves from his chief patron, the king of Gatrikha (Cooch Behar) in India, Zhabdrung included these items as the first offering item in the zhugdre ceremony. The custom became very popular after that.

In earlier times, people used ingredients that were locally available, but later these same ingredients were imported from India in large quantities. More recently, people have started cultivating the areca palm and the betel vine in their own gardens, but there is still not sufficient supply to meet the demand.

There is a saying associated with doma paney:







*Areca nut, the foodstuff from India,
Dissect it as if axing summer woods.*

*A beloved is the betel leaf,
Tear it as if tearing leaves.*

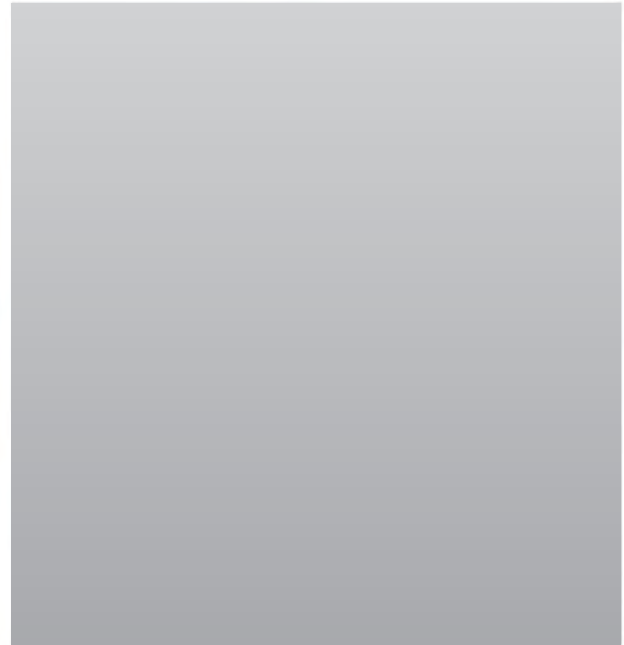
*The dazzling white lime,
Paint it as if to whitewash.*

The culture of chewing doma paney is so strong that even old people manage to consume it by crushing it in a *drechag* (metal grinder, also called *chagdre*) or in a *kodre*. *Drechag* or *chagdre* is a metal tube and a metal pestle, which is used to crush the betel nut and the other ingredient in the tube. The *kodre* is a skin bag, which is crushed between stones with the three ingredients inside.

The betel nuts and leaves are kept in a rectangular box with a hinged lid called a *chaka*, while the lime paste is kept in a circular box with a conical lid, called a *trimi*. Both *chaka* and *trimi* are usually made of silver or brass and embossed with intricate designs. Sometimes they are gold- or silver-plated. The king and the chief abbot would have *doma bathra*, a round silver betel nut container, which is carved with intricate motifs such as lotus or dragon.

3.2.4.4.3. Carrying Flint and Tinder

Bhutanese had to travel on foot not just for trade and in search of food, but also for study and pilgrimage. On a long and strenuous journey, the travellers would try to



make the night halt in a village. Usually the travellers would ask for shelter at houses on their way. While the owner of the house would normally welcome the strangers and extend hospitality until departure, one would not always come across such a host. Denying refuge to travellers was considered a non-virtuous act, which could well lead to future rebirth as a tortoise or snail, fated to carry their homes on their backs, as a result of refusing to host travellers in their past life.

However, when travellers have to travel through areas where there are no settlements, they must spend their nights under the sky, at the foot of a tree, in thick woods, in snow, or in caves or any other place that looks relatively comfortable. Therefore, travellers would carry flint and tinder with which to start a fire, as there were no matchboxes in the past. The equipment included a piece of metal, flint stone and tinder. Striking the flint stone on the metal produced sparks that ignited the tinder and with the help of dry wood, there would soon be a good fire going.

3.2.4.4.4. Nocturnal Wandering

Nocturnal wandering, as the phrase suggests, is a custom of meeting one's beloved secretly during the night. It is quite natural for young boys and girls to be attracted to

romantic adventures, when a boy sets his mind on the girl who appears to be the most beautiful in his eyes. Nevertheless, getting into an intimate relationship has to be suspended until he finds an opportunity to meet her in person. Therefore, he sets out on a lone nocturnal walk to find the place where she lives.

This custom has deeper meanings if looked at carefully. The custom was formerly accepted as part of personal growth, and may still be viewed in this way in some parts of the country. There are two methods of night wandering: agreed wandering and blind wandering. While agreed wandering is relatively easier as there is already an intimate relationship between the two partners, blind wandering is difficult and sometimes dangerous. One may not know whom one might encounter — the dog, the father or the mother once at the house, or pits or hobgoblins while on the way. If one tried to climb into the house through a window, there was the possibility of falling back onto the ground or encountering trouble once inside the premises. Yet, these difficulties were readily accepted as worth the risk by many. The night wanderer has to carefully plot his plan for getting into the house through either door or window or from the roof. Once he gets into the house, he has to copy the cat's way of seeing in the dark, walk along in absolute silence and get to his destination without disturbing anyone. Then his visit has to be accepted by the girl, or otherwise the household will

suddenly become awake. If he is permitted to stay for the night, he makes sure to leave the house before the first crow of the rooster.

The night visit is not driven just by physical urges; its planning and implementation also show signs of self-identity and maturing into manhood and a new sense of responsibility. Such an adventure often takes the lone walker through thick forests and narrow tracks along steep slopes but with minimal mishaps, as it is believed that there is a god of love who watches over the safety of the lover. Such risks are taken mostly by the already accepted lover.

The right to accept or to reject the relationship rests entirely with the woman. Thus, it becomes a basis for marriage for simple families, as for men and women who met through pre-marriage love; the outcome usually resulted in a good married life. The boy's father must watch where his son usually goes while the parents of the girl must also be aware of who comes to their daughter's bed. They intervene in the relationship if they consider it not entirely feasible on socio-economic grounds or if the blood relationship seems too close.

Quite often, the custom has been criticised as leading to births out of wedlock and men not returning as promised to take responsibility for their actions. Today, this custom is slowly, and rightly, becoming obsolete.

3.3. RITES AND RITUALS

Buddhism permeates daily life in Bhutan, and various rites and rituals are carried out in order to invoke deities and to remove hindrances. Though held countrywide, these rites and rituals vary from place to place in both type and grandeur. In ritual ceremonies and rites, there is strong influence from Bon, indigenous and pre-Buddhist religious cultures of Bhutan, as discussed below. The ethnic Nepalese residing mostly in southern Bhutan also have their own Hindu rituals. The Buddhist religious rites can be grouped into three broad categories, based on the purpose for which they are held: religious rites for the living, religious rites for the dead, and religious rites for achievement and success. Yet the following classification is not based on purpose of the religious rites but on the nature of the performance.

3.3.1. Bon Tradition

3.3.1.1. Shamanistic Tradition

A number of people in Bhutan still follow the Bon

tradition and seek the services of shamans to conduct rituals for them. Shamans are known by various names, such as *pawo*, *pam*, *neljorma*, *jomo*, *jab*, *bonpo*, *jhakri*, and *terda*, on account of both ritual and locality, as the type of shaman varies from community to community. A shaman acts as a medium between humans and the spirit world, for the purpose of healing patients, diagnosing the causes of sickness and mishaps or accidents, and for making predictions on health and wellbeing. These diagnoses and predictions play a vital role in the psychological wellbeing of the believers.

3.3.1.2. Cairn Worshipping

Stones and pebbles are piled up to form cairns at mountain passes and on either side of the pathways in honour of local deities of the pass. Any person crossing the pass or passing by the track picks up a stone and adds it to the existing pile as a symbolic offering to the deities seeking their protection. In the course of time, more





stones are added to make the pile grow bigger. Some travellers place leaves, flowers, small branches, incense and food as their offering.

Sometimes a cairn marks the spot from where one could get a view of the citadel of a deity. It is said that in the past, the cairns served as land boundary markers between places falling under two or more jurisdictions.

3.3.1.3. Invocation of Bon Deities

Bon tradition of worship and festive events are still popular in different districts. Here are some examples: The district of Ha observes the *bongko* or *boenka* that takes place once in three years. Likewise, Bala bongko is observed in Bjena Gewog of Wangdi Phodrang and the lhabon is practised in the communities of Mangde district.

Similarly, *Gazang lhasoe* is an invocation ritual performed in Martsala while *ahoe* is performed in Kheng region and *cha* in honour of the Guru zhe in Menbi community in Lhuentse. Likewise, *kharphe* is held in the villages of Tsamang in Mongar to invoke Guru zhe, while it is performed in honour of the Ode Gongjen in Zhemgang. Similarly, *yaklha* is celebrated annually in Ura on the 15th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar in honour of the Ode Gongjen, respected in Bumthang as the god of livestock, *norlha*. Additionally, there are other rituals commonly known as lhasoe performed in most villages across Bhutan, which are dedicated to various spirits and deities of the respective locality. These rituals and festivals are performed so that the villages get timely rainfall and good harvests, to ensure that the health of both people and animals remains sound, and to avert any other natural calamities.



Although no animal sacrifices are made in most of these rituals, some require meat elements. *Ap chungdu lhasoe* in Ha requires a yak for annual sacrifice although it is a Buddhist form of invocation to a member of the Buddhist pantheon.

3.3.2. Buddhist Tradition

Buddhism is founded on the teachings of Gautama Buddha some 2500 years ago. No religious rites were taught at the early advent of Buddhism. At that time, the practice was known as *dolug*, tradition of the sutra. The tradition of rituals is said to have emerged during the visit of Guru Padmasambhava to Tibet in the 8th century, through the secret tantric teachings known as *sangngag*.

3.3.2.1. Invocation Rituals

A popular invocation ritual amongst Bhutanese in their daily life is *serkem*. It is an offering of wine or black tea

or milk along with some food substance and gold dust in a chalice. The offering is made by chanting prayers accompanied by the sound of bell and drum. Food substances can be grains, roasted rice, barley, fruits and biscuits. This offering is made to the invisible spirits, deities of the land, and to dharmapalas, invoking their protection and blessings for day-to-day activities. Once the ritual is completed, the offering is thrown away in a clean place, mostly on rooftops.

Likewise, invoking spirits that live in the water or the earth, such as *lu* (naga) is also popular as Bhutanese believe that they are the custodians of water and the underworld as well as being deities of wealth. Offerings to these beings involve only smoke offering (i.e. the burning of incense) with fine brocades, rice, milk, cheese, butter and honey. If the underworld beings are not pleased or if humans happen to mistreat them, they create havoc through causing untimely rain, epidemics, droughts, and sickness to both humans and animals. Therefore, in order to coexist peacefully with the spirits of the water and the earth, it is very important to respect each other's presence and live harmoniously.

3.3.2.2. Purification Rituals

Keeping the residence free of impurities, negative forces and obstacles is accorded the highest degree of importance. Therefore, purification and cleansing rituals composed of producing smoke, and sprinkling of water are conducted frequently to keep impurities and imperfections away from the area. The purification ritual called *lhabsang* is very popular, and must be performed first thing in the morning before starting any new activity. It is an offering of smoke, serkem, and ritual cakes. For the purification ceremony, branches of aromatic trees and shrubs such as juniper, mountain azaleas, and other herbal plants are used together with a mixture of flour, butter and a little milk, which is then added to the already smoking branches. In addition to this, forest products that resemble meat and alcoholic substance through colour and taste are also used as smoke offering ingredients. These items are put in the fire or ember from time to time until the purification ritual is completed.

The cleansing ritual is known as *thrueso*, and involves cleansing with the help of pouring ambrosial water by a lama. The ablution water is a mixture of water, edible camphor and saffron. Normally the mixture is held in a *bumpa*, (ritual vase with a long spout). The *bumpa* is ornamented with a peacock feather and sacred *tsa kusha* (tiger grass) plumes. The lama holds a mirror, a

symbolic item to capture the deities that are invoked in the ceremony, and a white silk scarf symbolising a towel, with which to wipe off the impurities. Varieties of plants that produce aroma are lit to spread scented smoke. This ceremony is widely offered for a various reasons, such as the clearing of impurities caused by resentment, adverse conditions, negative energy and negative dependency. Some perform the ceremony before starting a new project or setting out on a long journey.

3.3.2.3. Summoning Rituals

Once born in this human body, it is important to strive to do well or at least survive meaningfully in society. To survive, one must acquire wealth and honour. In order to acquire wealth there is a ritual for summoning prosperity, *yangkuk*. During this ritual the gods and goddesses of wealth, Namse and Tsheringma are invoked. A long list of items for the prosperity casket (*yangdrom*) must be gathered, such as precious metals, precious gemstones, nine cereal grains, small statue of Dzambhala, and a collection of soil, wood, water and stone pieces from sacred sites. After prosperity has been summoned, the collected items are sealed and kept in the altar room. Once this ritual is in progress, it is believed that giving things away leads to loss of prosperity so should be avoided, while receiving things brings in prosperity and is considered good. Therefore, giving things away should be done only after three days from the completion of the ritual.

Another important ritual is the summoning of life, *tshekhug*, which is dedicated to Amitayus, the Buddha of Long Life. This ritual is to lengthen the life of a person by reciting Amitayus mantra as well as receiving empowerments of Amitayus. Similarly, when a person happens to get frightened at night or at very perilous



locations, his or her soul is likely to be stolen by wandering spirits or demons. In such a case, the person will get sick and if not treated accordingly in time, he or she will soon die. Therefore, in order to reinstate the soul, a ritual for summoning or restoring the soul (*lakug* or *lalu*) is carried out.



3.3.2.4. Rituals for Accumulating Merits

Tshog or feast offering accumulates merit, as it is an action aligned with one of the six paramitas (transcendental actions) of giving away alms to the deities and to all sentient beings. At every meal, a plate of food is offered at the altar to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, dakas and dakinis. On a bigger scale, a tshog offering or *tshogkhor* is organised on the 10th and 25th days of each lunar month. At a grand level, the offering can be *tshogbum* or 100,000 offerings of tshog.

If such offerings are made wholeheartedly and with pure intentions, one will accumulate enormous merit, especially if the offerings are genuinely dedicated to the benefit of all sentient beings. If one does not have anything to offer, it is still possible to accumulate merit equal to that of those who do. One just has to feel happy and praise what others do and wish that all sentient beings benefit from their offerings, besides wishing for a manifold increase in the fortune of the sponsor.

3.3.2.5. Wrathful Rituals

Wrathful rituals in Buddhism are known as *nansek phangsum* – *nanpa* for pressing, *seka* for incinerating and *phangwa* for hurling away. This ritual is comprised of chanting liturgical verses, conjuring hosts of spirits, and then repelling the negative forces, incinerating the evil spirits, and hurling the ritual cakes into the fire in order to suppress and clear all evil and negative forces.

When a household experiences lots of quarrels and heated verbal skirmishes both within and outside, loses belongings, and gets angry unnecessarily, it is a sign that adversity has struck. In order to suppress these adversities, the family performs a ritual to avoid disastrous results.

The burning or fire ritual is offered to the deity of fire. This ritual has the power to set everything in order in the event that other rituals have no effect in improving harvest, sickness, or misfortunes. During the fire ritual, if names of deceased people are written on a piece of paper and put it into the fire, these beings will be liberated from the samsaric world. The ashes from the fire offering have mystical power to prevent pests when scattered over a field, thus resulting in a good harvest.

Similarly, people are subject to various maledictions

from humans, gods, demons and spirits. In case other rituals have no effect on the maledictions, then the hurling ritual is the last and most effective of all. It has to be conducted by a great lama, as these three rituals are very complex and powerful. In the past, this ritual served as defence from enemies, so it was performed to keep the enemies at bay. This ritual has the mystical power to eliminate enemies and maledictions.

In line with the above, the exorcism ritual *gegtre* is also part of this wrathful ritual as it involves the driving away of evil and negative forces from houses or communities, thereby inviting peace, health, and prosperity to the households and community. The overall significance of performing these wrathful rituals is for peace to pacify sickness, demons, hindrances, and everything that is disharmonious, for the benefit of others.

3.3.2.6. Rituals for General Wellbeing and Prosperity

As described above, rituals are generally performed for the wellbeing of the people and animals. However, every ritual has its own significance. Here, in contrast to the rituals described above, some rituals or rimdro for the wellbeing of human and animals are described. The list is not exhaustive but just examples for general understanding.

An interesting and commonly known rimdro is *mikha*, to avert evil curses. The ritual consists of preparing an effigy having the beak of a bird. The effigy portrays all the body parts of a woman including breasts and genitalia. Material belongings including farming tools and edibles have to be laid around the effigy and thrown away along with the effigy. *Mikha* is also called *kharam*, the negative impact of backbiting. Therefore, in addition to this ritual, *kharam shing*, carved wooden phalluses are also fixed on poles driven into the ground near the entrance gate (if any) or fixed in front of the house by the approach path. The images are faced outwards, towards the direction from which visitors would approach, since their function is to ward off any potential evil eye emanations from passers-by. Similarly, the painted depictions of phalluses commonly seen on the front of Bhutanese houses are believed to ward off the evil *kharam*.

Another very common, important, elaborate and effective ritual performed by the Bhutanese is *jabzhi* or the ritual of Four Hundred Offerings. It is a ritual performed in order to overcome four great devils or evils: the evil of aggregates (*phung poi due*), the evil

of afflictions (*nyonmong pai due*), the evil of death (*chidag ki due*) and the evil of the son of god — lust — (*lhai bui due*). Therefore, one hundred stamped clay figures (*tshatsha*), one hundred butter lamps, one hundred effigies of a person, and one hundred ritual cakes are made respectively to overcome those four evils.

Yet another important but rarely performed ritual is *doema yudog*, a ritual of Tara, the sublime mother. It is one of the greatest and most elaborate rituals performed in Buddhist tradition. Although it suppresses all evils and enhances health and wealth, the main purpose of performing this ritual is to ward off black magic and other dangerously harmful activities plotted against the people and animals of the household.

Zandre khajur is a ritual performed to drive away harmful spirits in a household responsible for such things as sickness, quarrels and fights among the family members, and lack of ability to accomplish anything. It usually happens after the death of a person where the evil spirit that stole the life of the late person takes up residence in the house and creates havoc in the household. In such a situation, *zandre khajur* is performed to divert the evil spirit. Likewise, the list of rituals will go on based on the different themes and purposes but these are some of the important rituals that are performed for the wellbeing of the people and the animals.





3.4. FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS



3.4.1. Religious Festivals

3.4.1.1. Tshechu

Tshechu literally means the “Tenth Day”. Tshechu festivals are normally dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava and held on or close to the 10th day of a lunar month, as Guru Rinpoche had said that he would be present on this occasion for the benefit of sentient beings. Such festivals, dedicated to Guru Rinpoche, are held annually in dzongs and monasteries across Bhutan. People come from far and near, dressed in their finest attire, to witness the three-day event. The monks perform rituals in the temples and enact didactic mask dances for the benefit of the public.

Folk dances are interspersed between the mask dances to entertain the devotees, but actually, they are really the offerings of songs to the Bodhisattvas, dakas and dakinis. On these days, family members meet together not only to enjoy sumptuous lunches but also to educate each other on the moral significance of the dances and dramas enacted by the mask dancers. This is one way of learning about the sufferings undergone in samsara as well as during the intermediate stage of existence after death and helps guide one’s thoughts, speeches and actions along the right path while still in the land of the

living. The festival ends with the display of a *thongdroe* (meaning ‘liberation by sight’), a huge silk appliqué thangka on which the images of sublime beings are depicted, for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Tshechu was introduced in Bhutan by 4th Druk Desi Tenzin Rabgey (1638–1696), who in 1688 had sent one of his attendants to witness festivals in Tibet. The first tshechus were held at Trashi Choedzong, Thimphu in 1690 and at Rinpung Dzong, Paro in 1692. Similar events were then instituted at other dzongs and monasteries.

3.4.1.2. Accomplishment Ritual

A religious performance requiring intensive recitation and meditation for a certain period of time is called *drubchen* or *drubchoe*. Drubchen is a consecration ceremony held to indicate that the structure has been blessed by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, dakas and dakinis, and that from then on, it is protected against malevolent and demonic spirits.

Drubchoe is performed in order to invoke the principal deities so that they continue to grant their protective blessings to the humans and all other beings. Thimphu Tshechu is usually preceded by a two-week drubchoe



invocation to Mahakali (Palden Lhamo) while Punakha Tshechu is also preceded by two exhaustive weeks of drubchoe for Mahakala (Yeshe Gonpo). A few dances are performed in the courtyard to bless the people. The ceremonies are also held in dzongs wherever there are branches of the Monk Body.

3.4.1.3. Jomkora

Ama Jomo is the local protectress of Merak and Sakteng communities but most of eastern Bhutan pay homage to this female deity. Ama Jomo is believed to be the manifestation of Jomo Remati, Palden Lhamo or Mahakali. From the 21st day of the 7th month according to the Bhutanese calendar, people of Merak set off for their pilgrimage to Ama Jomo's citadel, the sacred mountain of Jomo Kukhar or Jomo Phodrang (meaning citadel/palace of Jomo). This pilgrimage is called *jomkora*. Laden with different items of tshog composed of fruits and food items, areca nuts and betel leaves, people set off on the journey dressed in their best attire. All the edibles taken on pilgrimage should be free of onion, garlic, egg, and pork, and all pilgrims making the journey should be free from contaminations such as birth or death impurities. It is not just a pilgrimage; for the local people, it is also a time to make offering to Ama Jomo. The pilgrimage is undertaken to thank the protectress as well as to renew their relationship with her for continued support. During the *jomkora*, religious ceremonies in honour of Ama Jomo are held

in the temple. Men set off to the summit of the citadel and offer prayers. A sacred song dedicated to the Ama Jomo, called "Aemo Chilay", is also sung only at this time.

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
Crossing one mountain pass and yet another,
Having crossed the Gogo Pass.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
At the Gogo La,
The stallion said he will not cross it.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
On the white stallion,
Hang the jingling bells.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
The one who resides on the three peaks,
The healthy Ama Jomo.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
The gallant pawo reside on the right,
The gallant pamo reside on the left.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
If circumambulated clockwise,
Defilements of the right side are cleansed.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
If circumambulated anticlockwise,
Defilements of the left side are cleansed.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

*How wonderful and auspicious it is!
If circumambulated both ways,
Defilements of the body are cleansed.
How wonderful and auspicious it is!*

On that journey, men take the opportunity to ride their best horses. Therefore, the pilgrimage also provides an occasion for horseracing, which is held at the place called Serkim La. Although there is no tradition of awarding prizes to the winners, any man falling off the horse or losing any belongings from his pack is subjected to fines.

3.4.1.4. Choekor and Wang Festivals

Carrying religious texts on the back and going around the village is called *choekor*. Choekor is commonly conducted in Bhutan when there are problems in the community such as either too little or too much rain, while in some communities it is an annual event. Although no special events accompany the choekor other than singing and dancing, in Merak, it is spiced up with unique performance of the *arpha* dance. People believe that arphas are the representations of heroes or warriors of King Gesar of Ling. They recite verses from the epic of King Gesar.

Wang means empowerment. It is conducted to obtain blessings from the root teacher on various teachings, and to benefit practices such as recitation of mantra, recitation of scripts, prayers and so on. However, in Merak, wang is the name of a festival where yak *cham* (dance) is performed. Here, empowerment is a part of the festival when devotees who come to witness the occasion receive empowerment from the lama. The popular empowerment is on Long Life but there are other empowerments related to specific Bodhisattvas.

3.4.1.5. Fire Empowerment Ceremony

This is receiving empowerment of fire performed during the drubchoe ceremonies in some communities across Bhutan. The most popular one is performed at Thangbi Lhuendrup Choedey Lhakhang in Bumthang for five days from the 13th day of the 8th month according to the

lunar calendar. Many prayer recitations, invocations, mask dances and folk dances are performed during the *mewang* festival. The festival also includes a dazzling fireworks display on an open ground. Monks and gomchen perform purification rituals while people jump over the flames to get rid of any negative karma and impure elements. Jumping over the fire three times is believed to clear off misfortune and ill luck for the coming year. Hence, people try to leap over the fire at least three times to free their minds from anxiety concerning such disturbing possibilities.

3.4.1.6. Mani and Rabney Festivals

Mani and rabney festivals are conducted in Bumthang. The festivals performed at Buli and Tangsibi in Bumthang are widely known as *Buli Mani* and *Tangsibi Mani*. When Tertön Dorje Lingpa revealed treasure called *Ngansong kuenchop* from Bey Langdra (a holy place sacred to Guru Rinpoche) in Wangdi Phodrang district and instituted a festival, it was known as *Langdra Mani*. It is possible that Dorje Lingpa's chief spiritual deity was Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig) from which the mani festivals must have been derived. Yet the term 'mani' refers to the lively celebration in Bumthang dialect, however, the mani is the essence of religion, the mantra of Avalokiteshvara.

Although the word rabney means consecration ceremony, it has become the name for some festivals performed in the Bumthang region, such as Namkha Rabney, Shingkar Rabney and Ngangbi Rabney. These festivals were first introduced to consecrate and commemorate the founding of newly built temples at that time. The term rabney became part of the name of the festival when various kinds of ritual dances, mask dances and religious ceremonies were performed to celebrate the special commemorative event.

Likewise, Sumthrang *kangsoe* is a religious festival performed in honour of the tutelary deities of Sumthrang village in Bumthang Ura. This *kangsoe* is held for five days from the 25th day of the 9th month of the Bhutanese lunar calendar and is a great religious festival during which sacred relics are displayed to the public and many sacred rituals take place, including performance of the mask dance of Sumthrang mountain deity, *Drak Tsen* Dorje Dradul.

3.4.1.7. Aule of Laya

Aule is performed in the Laya community of Gasa district. It is a recitation of beautiful verses dedicated to Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and his wonderful

activities in Bhutan. Before the main event, people make a contribution from their first harvest of the year at the community temple of Omchu Trashi Lhakhang, before a statue of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Aule is performed annually from the 12th to 19th of the 9th month according to the Bhutanese calendar.

The series of verses describe the ladder, door, flooring, oven, nomad life, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal's visit, the making of Bhutanese traditional paper, formation of the universe, construction of *dzongs*, birds, and then finally concludes with verses describing offerings to all the deities. Aule is held first in the house at Tongra village where Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal took shelter for his first three nights in Bhutan. Then the groups move on from house to house, reciting the verses, until all the houses of Laya have been visited.

3.4.1.8. Chorten Kora

Chorten Kora is the name of a stupa in Trashi Yangtse district in eastern Bhutan. The festival is also known by the same name, meaning 'circumambulation of the stupa'. It is an annual event held on the 30th day of the 1st month of the lunar calendar. It is also known as *namgang kora* or circumambulation on the New Moon day. The circumambulation is also held on the 15th day of the same month, and came to be known as *dakpai kora*, a circumambulation meant for the Dakpa people of Tawang District in Arunachal Pradesh, India.

It is said that a girl from Tawang who possessed all the signs of a dakini offered her life and was entombed

alive in the bumpa part of the stupa while it was being constructed as the inner relic of the monument. This event took place on the Full Moon day of the 1st month. The people of Tawang still carry this memory and come to make circumambulation of the stupa every year on the same day.

The stupa was built in 1740 by Lama Ngawang Lodroe in order to subdue a demon at the site and is believed to have taken 12 years to complete. A similar circumambulation is also held at Gomphu Kora in that same district. It is known as *gomphu kora*. On these occasions, people — young and old alike — make circumambulation around this religious structure, twirling prayer wheels and reciting prayers and mantras to gain merit.

3.4.1.9. Chodpa

Chodpa is making offering to the deities. In recent times, the ritual has become more of a festival due to inclusion of activities such as folk songs, dances and mask dances in the chodpa. Chodpa is very popular in both central Bhutan and Zhemgang district. Chodpa such as *Meto chodpa* (flower offering of Sewshing), *Gaden chodpa* (festival of Gaden) and *Phala chodpa* in Bumthang and *Prew chodpa* in Zhemgang are also performed on their respective dates. *Prew* or *Trew* or monkey is the symbol of the fourth month of the Bhutanese calendar. It was in this monkey month or *treda* that Guru Rinpoche was born, hence it is considered an auspicious month. In their local language, Zhemgang people call this Prew chod.



3.4.1.10. Annual Ritual

Lochoe or *choku* (*choku* is corrupt form of *choga*) is an annual religious ritual conducted by a household irrespective of their economic status in the society. The household conducts this annual ritual to invoke the family deities and as such, it is sometimes called *choesung* or *lhasoe*. In some places it is called as *due kurum* (annual rituals) as it has to be performed annually for the wellbeing of the household and its animals.

3.4.1.11. Fasting Ritual

Nyungney is an occasion during which participants (monks, gomchens, anims or farmers) remain fasting and silent in order to cleanse off their negative karma and impious elements. Participants are expected to observe fasting and silence (except recitation of mantra and texts) for about 24 hours at each session. A *nyungney* may vary from one session to eight sessions, each session lasting two days. The ritual is dedicated to the Compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and is said to have been first introduced by an Indian Princess, Gelongma Palmo, who chose to lead the life of a recluse.

On the final day, the lama and monks perform *tshog* offering to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, an occasion which is attended by many people. From the patronage point of view, the *tshog* offering is an act of giving food to people and all those who come with the hope of fulfilling their hunger like the hungry ghosts and other spirits. The patron, therefore, collects as many guests as possible for the occasion.

3.4.1.12. Summer Retreat

Yarney is a summer season retreat for monks lasting for about 45 days, in keeping with the tradition of annual summer retreat observed during the time of Buddha Gautama. Today this is an annual affair in our monasteries and Buddhist institutes of higher studies. Tango monastery initiated the *yarney* in 1967. It begins on the 15th day of the 6th month and concludes on the 30th day of the 7th month. This is the peak rainy season, when visible and invisible insects of all kinds come into life, propelled by the humid and warm climatic conditions. In order to avoid the accidental killing of these insects during the peak season, monks are forbidden to travel away from their institutions at this time of the year.

During the *yarney*, the monks take special vows and follow the strictest monastic disciplines. They wear yellow ceremonial robes, chant elaborate prayers before



and after meals from their begging bowls, forego taking the afternoon meal, remain within the precincts of the monastery, and do not take part in any kind of entertainment; by such observances they accumulate great merits. During this period, common people visit the monastery, pray and make food offerings to the monks to accumulate merits themselves.

3.4.1.13. Commemoration of Death Anniversary

The ritual conducted to commemorate the passing away of an important religious or secular figure in the subsequent years is known as *kuchoe*. It is observed to pay tribute to that person, reflecting on his or her accomplishments in relation to the present situation. It is also a day to seek blessings through devotional prayers. This ritual observance is carried out on the death anniversary day. It is recommended that one recites prayers dedicated to or composed by the late person. Death anniversaries are commemorated through religious rites such as *Lama Choepa*, *Drakpo Marchen*, *Dechog*, and *Tshepakme* depending upon the lineage tradition of the deceased person.

3.4.2. Secular Festive Events

3.4.2.1. National Events

Apart from religious celebrations, we also celebrate a number of National Events or *gyalyong duechen* that are not directly associated with religion. In order to promote the notion of ‘national solidarity’, Bhutanese celebrate the National Day on the 17th of December every year. It was on this day in 1907 that our ancestors handed over the charge of the country and its people to *Gongsa* (Supreme Leader) Ugyen Wangchuck, at the same time establishing a hereditary monarchy through male heirs of his line. With a centralised government, the people of Bhutan saw a new measure of peace, harmony and progress in their lives after enduring more than 200 years of social unrest, frequent warfare and struggles for power between ambitious local rulers. National Day is an occasion to remind all citizens of the establishment of monarchy and the subsequent benign and much more peaceful reigns of the successive kings.

In addition to National Day, Bhutanese celebrate the birth anniversaries of our Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck (11th November) and the Fifth King and reigning monarch, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (21st February). Furthermore, Coronation Day of His Majesty the

King, Constitution Day and other important national events are also celebrated. People celebrate these days with a sense of pride and patriotism and say prayers for the long life of our great monarchs and the continued peace and happiness of the tsa-wa-sum — the king, the country and the people.

3.4.2.2. New Year Celebrations

Although the *losar* is celebrated as a New Year in Bhutan, there are other occasions that have become New Year too. These are briefly described in the following sections.

3.4.2.2.1. Dangbi Losar

Dangbi losar is celebrated on the first two days of the first month according to the Bhutanese calendar. Government offices, education institutes and other agencies remain closed for the occasion. It is a very important annual event for families and the community, giving everyone the chance to come together to enjoy one another’s company, play traditional games and sports such as archery and *khuru* (outdoor darts), and to enjoy delicious foods and drinks.

3.4.2.2.2. Traditional Day of Offering

Celebration of the traditional day of offering was



instituted in the Zhabrung's time, after Bhutan had been consolidated as a nation-state. On this day, the local administrators came from all parts of the country with their entourages, to make offering on behalf of the people to the Zhabdrung in Punakha. The offerings comprised first sacred offerings from the harvest, and dairy products. The Zhabdrung, considering it as an auspicious occasion, made the first offerings to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and deities in the monasteries. Official appointments to various monasteries were also conferred on this day. This auspicious occasion was celebrated as the Day of the *Bulwa* (day of the offering) which continues to be observed even today. Similarly, the same day is observed as a New Year (Chunipa Losar) by the people of the eight eastern districts (or *sharcho khorlo tsipgay*). It falls on the 1st day of the 12th month.

3.4.2.2.3. Lomba

From the 29th day of the 10th month to the 1st day of the next month every year, the districts of Ha and Paro observe Lomba, which means the good year that has ended is now carried over to another year of prosperity with the gift of a bountiful harvest. They propitiate their local deities for their protection and support for timely rain and prevention of diseases, and the underground beings for their grant of prosperity. They prepare human effigies with all kinds of human belongings like games items, household items and clothing and then cast them away along with the diseases and sufferings. This is an occasion when all members of the family, wherever they live and work, gather for a grand feast and pray together for the peace and prosperity of the country, the king and royal family and their own family for yet another good year ahead. They make special dumplings from buckwheat flour and the green leaves of turnips and distribute these, to all near and dear ones and other well-wishers.

3.4.2.2.4. Jawog Karmai Nyarub

Nya means full moon, *rub* means meeting and *karma* means star. Karmai Nyarub means coming together of the Pleiades and the full moon, which happens once a year on the 15th day of the 10th month in the lunar calendar. In Paro, this is celebrated annually as a New Year in one block where there is a village called Jawog. Elsewhere in Bhutan, this is observed by burning away the evil elements of the past year in heaps of hay, while boys play with one end of long pegs struck into the ground, going round and round holding the other end imagining the crushing of evil into the ground.

3.4.2.3. Winter Solstice

Guengi nyinlo is the Winter Solstice, which is considered auspicious because from this date many things change astrologically. The previous year's animal sign ends and the New Year animal sign takes effect. This New Year is observed with great enthusiasm in Thimphu, Punakha, Dagana and Wangdi Phodrang districts and some parts of Chukha as well. The day is rolled out based on Bhutanese astrology by young children reciting *Lole* on the eve of the winter solstice. Young children go from door to door chanting the verse. In return, they are given rice, butter, and meat by the generous households. On the following day (i.e. the day of the solstice) they go for a picnic.

Here are the verses of the *Lole*:

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let livestock fill the ground floor,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let horses fill the entrance,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let grains fill up the middle floor,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let sons and daughters fill the house,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let flagpoles fill the roof,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let meat fill the meat store,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Good New Year! Good New Year!
Let wines fill the wine store,
Good New Year! Good New Year!*

*Now we hear thumping of footsteps,
Here comes the fortunate host.
Picking up the golden phueta,
Opening the golden box,
Here come the lavish one phueta of rice, a pair of pork
slices, and one sang of butter.*



3.4.2.4. Lochu of Sha District

Wangdi Phodrang district was known as Sha in the olden days and hence the festival is known as *Shagi Lochu*. Lochu is celebrated every three years in the Sha valley for three days coinciding with the Winter Solstice. Lochu consists of rituals propitiating the war deity or *dralha* and is a festival for the brave warriors of the past. Like any other ritual, it is conducted to invoke and appease the pantheon of Drukpa protective deities for the wellbeing of the Sha community and the nation at large. This festival is accompanied by more merrymaking activities such as performance of war dance by pazaps, adorning of a phallus, and the local version of beauty pageant amongst others. Furthermore, invocation of the war deity and exorcising of malignant spirits also form part of the festivities.

3.4.2.5. Dasain

Dasain, or Durga Puja, is an annual Hindu festival in South Asia that celebrates the worship of the Hindu goddess, Durga (known as the embodiment of Mahakali, Maha Saraswati, and Mahalaxmi). The ceremony falls in the Ashvin month in the Hindu calendar. It has its roots in events narrated in the Sanskrit epic poem, the Ramayana, in which Lord Ramachandra defeated the evil demon King Ravana, after he performed the nine-day Puja and received Tikka at the altar of Durga on the 10th day. The Southern Bhutanese community begins performing the prayers to invoke Goddess Durga (or Durga Puja) on the first day of the new moon and concludes with the Tikka ceremony on the 10th day, after which the Dasain festival is celebrated for five days. Likewise, other festivals such as Tihar (Deepawali), the Festival of Lights, Flowers and Affection, Magai Segrati, Sauni Segrati, and Nuwagi are also widely celebrated by southern Bhutanese.

3.4.2.6. Meeting of Nine Evils

It is said that the black planet Nyinag revolved round the Mount Meru from the right side while the demoness Drogshing went around from the left side. They met on the north side of Mount Meru on the 7th day of the 11th month in the lunar calendar. Thinking there was no one around, the brother and sister engaged in a union, which then made the wind above move down beneath them and the wind below move up above them while the side winds went into a turbulent cyclone. Thus, there arose nine different evil signs causing

calamities, epidemics and other bad signs on earth that came to be observed as *nyenpa gu-dzom*. Hence, this day is observed as 'meeting of the nine evils' and not recommended for doing anything at all as virtuous deeds will bear no results but any bad actions will have multiple consequences. That is why everybody stops working on this day, and engages in games like archery, doegor, khuru and so forth instead.

3.4.2.7. Blessed Rainy Day

This day is an important occasion for the Bhutanese. It is believed that when the star rikhi or water star comes right above the crown of the Buddha in the Buddha Field above, then blessed nectar drops from the Buddha's crown and comes in contact with earthly precipitation, making the water blessed and ambrosial in nature. People take baths at that time, in order to cleanse themselves of all defilements, obstacles and infections (both spiritual and physical) and enjoy the fruits of prosperity. Blessed rainy day is called *thruwabab*, and lasts for a week. An astrologer usually announces the precise time when the nectar will be released. Getting up early is a problem for most people nowadays, so it is advised to leave a bowl of water outside at night, so that the dew of the stars mixed with the blessed nectar will fall into the bowl, transforming the contents into blessed water to be mixed with one's bathing water.



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FOLK KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY

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- Methods of Diagnoses and Treatment

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- Healing based on Textual Sources
- Healers diagnosing or treating in a State of Trance
- Non shamanistic ritual healers belonging to Oral and Popular Tradition

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4.7. INDIGENOUS MEASURING UNIT

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- Beliefs and Superstition about Dreams

4.9. HOUSEHOLD & KNOWLEDGE OF ECONOMY

4.10. TRADITIONAL FOOD AND BEVERAGES



FOLK KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY

Folk Knowledge and Indigenous Technology is one of the most important cultural heritages of Bhutan. It plays a significant role in the development of Bhutan as it reflects the multiple dimensions of Bhutanese society and its culture. Before the advancement of modern technology, folk knowledge and indigenous technology was the long standing traditions and practices of the indigenous communities in the country. People those days basically depended on folk knowledge and indigenous technology for survival.

Folk knowledge and technology in this context is expressed through traditional medicines, traditional measurement, folk meteorology, astrological knowledge, beliefs and superstitions, economy, food and beverages.

4.1. TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Although there were instances of Bhutanese being sent by their patrons to study Traditional Medicine called *Sowa Rigpa* (*Sro ba rig pa*) in Tibet before the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (Zhabdrung Rinpoche), it was only after 1616 that Sowa Rigpa was established in Bhutan. Bhutanese students went to study medicines in Tibet and in return, these doctors provided medicinal herbs as far as Lhasa and further on to Kham. Tibetans had always referred to Bhutan as *Menjong*, or Land of Medicine, because of the natural growth of varieties of medicinal plants at different altitudes ranging from 200 to 7800 meters above sea level.

Most of the trained doctors would return home to start private practices in monasteries or *dzongs*. Thus the Bhutanese tradition of Sowa Rigpa developed independent of its Tibetan roots. Although the basic texts used were the same, some differences have developed in practice by way of adapting to the country's situation. The specific knowledge and experiences gained by the Bhutanese practitioners over the centuries are still kept alive in the country.

The profession of traditional medicine was greatly supported, especially after Zhabdrung Rinpoche, by the *Poenlops* and *Dzongpoens* (regional leaders). The Royal Courts employed at least one or two private *Drungtsho* or physicians. The names of many traditional drungtshos of the past who excelled in their skills have remained alive in the memory of the people long after their death. Finally in the early 1960s, His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck established a centre for traditional medicine in Dechencholing to provide indigenous medical services to the people. This has grown into the National Institute for Traditional Medicine in Kawa Jangsa in Thimphu that trains drungtshos, treats patients of all ailments and manufactures the required medicines. For the Bhutanese people, it gives them a choice for treating their ailments.

The Bhutanese indigenous medicine has its origin in the teachings of the Buddha and, as such, has a religious orientation in its practices whereby the drungtsho needs to be a devotee of Medicine Buddha. Health and spirituality are thus inseparable and together they reveal the true origins and healing of any sickness. The art of healing is therefore a dimension of the sacred.

The traditional medical system is a conglomeration of science, philosophy and religion that blend culture and tradition, in which Buddhism has a big influence. It provides a comprehensive way of understanding the universe, man and his sicknesses. Unlike modern medicine, Traditional Medicine does not have surgical miracles but connect our lives and sicknesses to the natural causes of things. The Bhutanese believe that all that matter is the strong belief and faith in the healers.

4.1.1. Medicinal Ingredients

Therapeutically, the traditional drungtshos rely on herbal combinations, limited acupuncture therapy (including use of the golden needle), applications of heat (usually with metal rods), and minor surgical interventions, all done in the context of Buddhist ritualism. The indigenous medicine in Bhutan is largely collected from plants grown around the country, varieties of animal organs and minerals in the compositions of medication. Originally, herbal powders were swallowed with warm water, but with the introduction of modern equipment, the mixture of herbs is now produced as pills. The specific formulas used in Bhutan differ somewhat from their Tibetan counterparts in that there are local influences on the selection of herbs, though most of the key herbs are the same, where the altitude and climatic conditions are similar to that of Tibet. All these ingredients are processed and mixed as prescribed in Sowa Rigpa pharmacology to make drugs in the form of pills, tablets, syrups, powders.

4.1.2. Methods of Diagnosis and Treatment

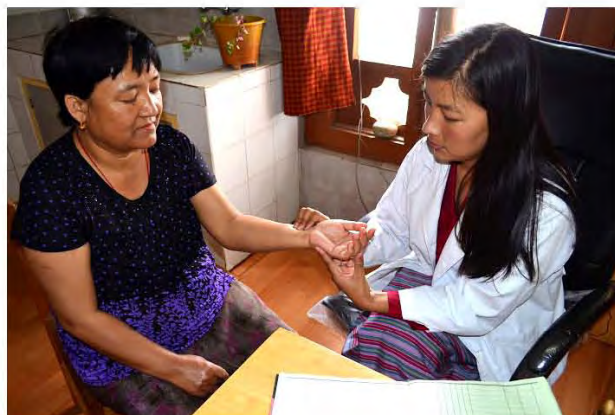
The fundamental principles of indigenous medicine grew out of philosophy that the bile (*thripa*) corresponds to fire, the phlegm (*beken*) to water and the air (*lung*) to the wind of the universe. It is believed that disease or physical disharmony is caused by an imbalance of any of these three factors in the body. A drungtsho diagnoses or treats patients by means of physical or pharmacological procedures. The main methods of diagnosis are feeling the pulse, checking urine, and examining the bodily organs or parts, as well as interviewing the patient.

The methods of diagnoses and treatments offered by the Traditional Hospital include:

OPD Services

General Out Patient Department's (OPD) services, include, but not limited to the following services:

Physical examination and pulse reading: methods of physical assessment through observation and pulse reading on radial artery as per sowa rigpa text.



Urine Analysis: A diagnosis method where urine is analysed in a laboratory to assess the colour, bubbles, sediments, scum frothing, smell, etc. at various temperature, as per sowa rigpa text.

History taking: preliminary method of diagnosis by asking a series of questions with regard to diet, behaviour, onset of illness and overall condition of the patient.

Observation: is an act of perceiving physical signs and symptoms of different illness in order to arrive at certain prognosis to ascertain further investigations.

Health education on diet and behaviour: is a process of imparting health information to other parties including patients on dos and don'ts on healthy living.

Referral of patients to allopathic and within: process of referring patients to other health facilities, either to allopathic or traditional practitioner.

Dispense traditional medicine: is a method of dispensing traditional medicine that are prescribed by registered physician to patients and providing them with counselling as per good dispensing practices.

Therapy Services

Jamched (byams-dpyad - Non-invasive/mild Therapy)

The following services are provided by a drungtsho or *menpa* who is registered with the Bhutan medical and Health Council.

Langdug (blangs dug): A therapeutic way of applying herbal steam on the concealed points as prescribed by drungtsho or menpa.

Chulum (chhu lums): Herbal bath therapy services provided by an experienced Drungtsho or Menpa.



Langlum (blangs lums): A therapeutic way of applying herbal steam as prescribed by drungtsho or menpa.

Chinglum (bchings lums): A process of applying herbal compression on the conceal points as prescribed by drungtsho or menpa.



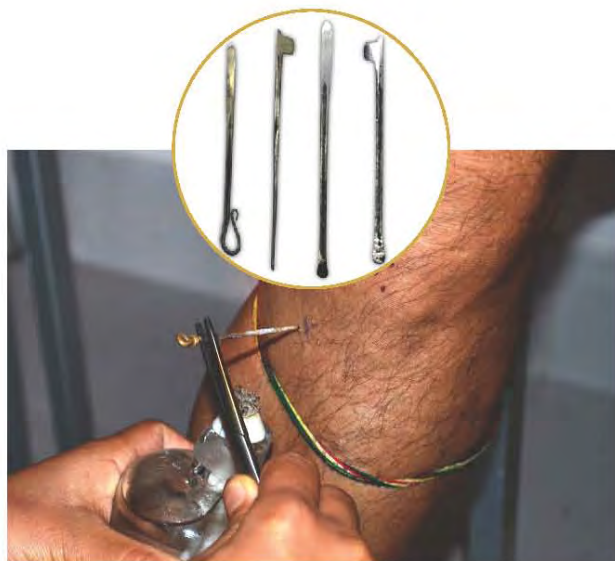
Jugpa (*rgyugs pa*): A massage therapy service prescribed by drungtsho or menpa.



Tsubched (*rtsub dpyed* - Invasive/strong Therapy)

The following services are provided by a drungtsho or menpa who is registered with the Bhutan Medical and Health Council.

Serkhab: a therapeutic way of inducing the heat through gold needle as prescribed by drungtsho or menpa.



Ngulkhab (*ngul khab*): a therapeutic way of inducing the heat through Silver Needle as prescribed by drungtsho or menpa.

Tar (*gtar*): A process of extracting blood from points using specific instruments and is provided by an experienced drungtsho.

Metsa (*me btsa*): A direct moxibustion therapy provided by an experienced drungtsho or menpa.

Galon Metsa (*sga rlon me btsa*): Indirect moxibustion therapy using a layer of thinly sliced ginger to buffer the heat produced by the moxa and applied at prescribed points.

Tradhen Serkhab (*spra lden gser khab*): Another type of gold needle therapy but using moxa as source of heat introduced at the other end of the needle and is provided by a drungtsho or menpa.



Mey bum (*me bum*): Another way of bloodletting therapy using a heated copper or glass vase (*bumpa*) to extract unwanted blood at the prescribed points provided by an experienced *Tsubched Khedzin* and *Khechok*.

Kam Khab: An acupuncture treatment provided by *Kam khab Khechok* and *Kam khab Rabjam* who has specialized training in Acupuncture.

Numtshug: A therapeutic compression using warm oil with medicated herbs applied on the prescribed points, provided by *Tsubched Rabjam*.

Tshug rig: A method of applying different therapeutic compression using medicated herbs packed in a piece of cloth as provided *Tsubched Khedzin* and *Tshubched Rabjam*.

Lay Nga (*las lnga* - Five Therapeutic Measures)

The following services are provided by a drungtsho or menpa who is registered with the Bhutan Medical and Health Council.

Shel (*bshal*): A process to evacuate the bowels and its content using herb decoction infused with oil, provided by *Lay Nga Khechok*, *Khedzin* and *Rabjam*.

Chug (*skyug*): A method of cleansing the upper body



through emesis using herb infused with oil, provided by Lay Nga Khechok, Khedzin and Rabjam.

Najong (*sna sbyong*): A process of nasal cleansing using medicated warm oil introduced through nasal cavity, provided by Lay Nga Khechok, Khedzin and Rabjam.

Jamtsi (*'jam rtsi*): Another form of enema prescribed

for cleansing the bowel using medicated warm oil introduced through anal route, provided by Lay Nga Khechok, Khedzin and Rabjam.

Niruba (*ni ru ha*): Another form of enema prescribed for cleansing the bowel using medicated decoction introduced through anal route, provided by Lay Nga Khechok, Khedzin and Rabjam.

4.2. LOCAL HEALING PRACTICES

Before the introduction of modern medical treatment, illness, misfortune/ill luck were usually attributed to demonic causes. Local deities, demons and spirits of all kinds were considered to be responsible for certain illnesses. To heal these diseases, it was necessary to practice certain rituals where only the great lamas, monks, gomchens, and shamans were in a position to do so. This healing practice, thus involved much divination in the means of diagnosing and recognizing the spells causing the illness and exorcism as the way of treating the patient.

The local healing practices are categorized under the following themes:

4.2.1. Healers Treating through Physical Observation

Bone-setter

Bone-setters (*Dz. ru to btsug mi*) treat dislocations and fractures of the limbs, hip traumas, joints and limbs sprain. Local bone-setters are not formally trained but rather claimed to have generated the skills through practical experience usually gained by treating animals while some of them have learnt from their fore fathers. They resort to gentle handlings, and bringing back the bones into position, then steadying them with the help of wooden or bamboo splints (sometimes tree bark or by soaking the bandage cloth in clay) and cloth bandages.

Most of the healers give the patients some alcohol prior to the treatment in order to reduce the pain and to "warm the muscles". Some do apply oil or butter massage as a remedy on the injured part, stimulate with boiled leaves; or administer orally a remedy supposed to enhance the healing process either by decoction of leaves or bark or mixing grounded lac with water, or remedy using a mineral called *doshal* (*rdo mtshal*), which probably is cinnabar. Most bone setters recommend the intake of rich food (fresh meat, butter,) for speedy recovery.

Dug Jibmi (Poison-sucker)

The healers, as the name indicates – poison suckers (*dug lakhan* in Tshangla language) – are supposedly known to extract substances like poison (*dug*) locally from various parts of the patient's body. The beliefs and fears related to those affected by poison are mostly found in Eastern Bhutan. Poison in this context is very vague, and does not clearly define the substances or agents. It is rather believed to have been contracted through the intake of food especially rancid butter, meat, cheese and alcohol warmed with fried eggs, and also believed to be given by certain families.

Further, it is believed that a person can contract poison without any material penetration into the body:

- by sitting in certain places especially in a cold or wet places in the forest (*ron dug*);
- through wind, and by being hit by the invisible arrow of a *tsan*-spirit (*tsan dug*);
- through a quarrel with another person (*khon dug*);
- by being looked upon by certain women, or the frustrated desire of a woman (in case of a man falling ill).

There is a belief that sometimes the curse of the poison stays in the family which is involuntarily passed on from mother to daughter. The poison then affects people from outside one's family circle. It is also believed that the poison is contracted when one's fortune-vitality is low (negative *lungta* or *wangta*). The notion of evil also comes close to that of poison in certain areas. In certain places of Western Bhutan, drip (pollution) is also viewed as a cause for coming closer to poisoning (*dug*) and therefore extracted in the same way.

Just as for 'poison' afflictions in general, poison-suckers are consulted by patients arriving with an already established diagnosis. Those people residing especially in the remote parts of the country are known to have strong belief and faith in the healer in their locality. That is why they prefer to contact the healers before consulting a medical doctor or health worker. There is a general belief that if there is poison in the body, modern medicine can react adversely with it. The poison-sucker checks the pulse of the patients to ascertain the diagnosis and suck the blood from the affected part of the patient's body.

There are different methods of treatment. Healers cut the affected part of the body with a blade to extract the impure blood. Some healers use horn with a hole at the tip. The broader end of the horn is placed over the cut and blood is sucked out from the other end. Some healers claim to have spiritual power so that their *mantra* can cause miracles prior to the application of their method. If a few drops of blood come out while sucking, the poison is supposed to have been completely removed from the patient's body which would help the patient recover from the sickness.

Tshachu and Menchu (Hot Spring and Hot Stone-bath) Therapy

Tshachu and *menchu* are quite popular in Bhutan. There are a number of them in various parts of the country. People dip their bodies in the tshachu and menchu because they believe that the medicinal properties of the

water can cure various ailments ranging from arthritis to body aches and sinuses. During winter we find a number of people visiting the popular tshachu. The five most well known tshachu are: the Gasa Tshachu (Gasa District), Koma Tshachu (Gon Shari), Chubu Tshachu (Punakha District), Dur Tshachu (Bumthang District), Duenmang Tshachu (Zhemgang District), and Gelephu Tshachu (Gelephu Drungkhag).

In menchu, water is heated by submerging red-hot stones into the bath in which the patients dip their bodies and stay as long as they can, adding more hot stones when the water gets cold. This is also a popular curative method and is used throughout the country.

4.2.2. Healing based on Textual Sources

Tsip/tsipa (astrologer) is known for their divination and healing rituals in the country. Literally known as "calculators", the tsipas are supposed to have studied a wide range of treatises and practical manuals dealing with divinatory calculation, which is one of the five major Buddhist sciences. The vast majority of them are *gomchen* (lay religious practitioners), *gelong* (monks) or *getre* (defrocked monks).

Based on the request of the people in various circumstances, the *tsip* usually consults an astrological manual called *datho* (*zla tho*) and search for connections between one's birth marks, the connectivity between various elements and so on and determine what and in which manner a ritual should be performed. For instance,



if a person is sick, the divinatory calculation (*tsi*) and divination (*mo*) provides indication concerning the cause of the illness generally in terms of evil spirits with the necessary remedy which is mostly ritual. The calculation never leads to any specific medical diagnosis, nor does it oppose medical treatment as such. However, it might indicate unsuitable dates or directions, in which case medical consultation or treatment have either to be delayed for a short while, or to be preceded by appropriate rituals. Besides carrying out divinatory calculation, they also perform rituals that would remedy sickness as indicated in their astrological divination.

4.2.3. Healers Diagnosing or Treating in a State of Trance

There are healers who treat patients by being in a state of trance called shamans, a medium that has existed in different regions of the country for centuries. They are known by different titles in different regions, yet all are comparable to shamans. Performing divination to diagnose and remove sickness, they play an important psychological and curative role in a rural society where believing in supernatural power is a part of life. They are briefly explained below:

1. **Pawo (dpa' bo)** is a male medium who get possessed by a local deity. Performing divination, their role is to diagnose problems and causes of illnesses spoken by the deity through the pawo in trance. They either drive away the harmful spirits that had taken possession of the sick person or spell out

what kind of rituals and prayers to be performed to convalesce the sick person. Known as nenjom (*rnal-'byor*) this practice can be found in the west, central and eastern regions of Bhutan.

2. **Pam/pamo (dpa' mo)** is a female medium who also get possessed by a local deity. Their functions are same as pawos and are common in the central and eastern regions of Bhutan.
3. **Nenjom (rnal 'byor ma)** is a female medium possessed by a local deity. Her functions are same as the two above. This tradition is associated with the western region of Bhutan.
4. **Terdag (gter bdag)** is a wrathful deity who was entrusted as guardian of the treasure by Guru Rinpoche. Hence Terdag gi Pawo is a medium possessed by Terdag. This is closer to the Tibetan oracles and diagnoses problems and comes up with remedies through long trances. This tradition is common in the north-eastern part of Lhuentse district.
5. **Jhankri/Dhami:** Jhankri/dhami is the term in Lhotsham language for the traditional ritual practitioners or healer believed to possess the ability to represent local deities or spirits. When required, they invoke the spirits and go into trance to get access to the healing knowledge to help the patients. They can conduct the ritual activities anywhere based on the situation. They can be male as well as female. Normally, becoming a shaman is by choice





of the spirit or through family lineage. They get the knowledge and power in dreams but they undergo further initiation under teachers for intensification of their ability.

6. **Ban-jhaankri:** The *Ban-jhaankri* (mythical wild forest spirit) is believed to be a being of small stature covered in hair and live in caves in the forest. This spirit is usually believed to abduct children; usually boys (sometimes even girls) who he thinks have the potential to be great shamans in the future. The abducted children are believed to be taken to his cave for honing their skills for at least six months and pass their initiation so that they become powerful when they returned home after the training. There are instances of individuals who claim to have returned after being abducted and released by the Ban-jhaankri. The equivalent terms for shaman among the other ethnic Lhotsham groups are: *Bijuwa* among Rais and *Phedengba* among Limbu/Subba ethnic groups.
7. **Jomo** is a female medium possessed by female deity called [Ama] Jomo, the powerful mountain deity commonly worshipped by the community of Merak and Sakteng in Trashigang and other parts of Bhutan. Like other mediums, this also diagnoses problems and proposes remedies by getting into trance.

Usually the shamans perform two categories of rituals in their trance. They are annual *shagpa* (propitiating) ritual and healing ritual. A number of shamans, possessed by a deity not speaking the local language need the help of an assistant called *choe shampa*. The annual shagpa consist of making propitiation rituals dedicated to their deities, and it is believed that if shagpa is not performed then their deities would be just as happy to send misfortune or obstacles to the shaman. Some shamans are also known to perform the function of yearly collective village-rituals for the well-being and prosperity of the village community especially in case of collective misfortune like crop failure. It thus appears that these healers have a more general function of protecting their community from misfortunes of all kinds.

The healing ritual is basically performed for the sick and at the request of others. Many Bhutanese believe that diseases and sicknesses are caused due to an imbalance in the different 'channels' which compose the body, and that they are often caused by one of the numerous revengeful spirits which are associated with certain symptoms. Therefore, patients seek the help of a shaman to find out which spirit is upset with them and then provide a cure for the patient by appeasing the spirit.

Unlike the *tsip*, *gomchen* and *drungtsho*, they do not choose to learn their lessons for practices, but instead they do this under the inspiration of the deity or deities possessing them. The diagnosing and/or healing performances of the shaman, in a state of possession by their deity or deities, generally include identification of the agent of the individual patient's illness, bringing back the "life force or vitality" (*srog* or *bla* in Dzongkha; and *yong* in Tshangla), and fight with evil spirits. Shamans usually do not resort to any physical therapeutic procedure and do not administer remedies.

4.2.4. Non-Shamanistic Ritual Healers belonging to Oral Tradition

La kukni (retrieving the lost soul): The term "la" (bla) in Dzongkha is referred to the "life force" which is believed to be taken away by one of the eight classes of demi-gods, causing illness to the person. It is *la kukni* in Dzongkha while the speakers of Tshangla dialect call it *yong raley*.

The belief in deities and spirits is very strong in Bhutanese society. It is believed that for every stone or tree, there is an owner or commander. When the owner (spirit) is not appeased accordingly, they get annoyed and cause harm not only to human beings but also to the animals and to the environment at large. Further, it is believed that if the places where local spirits reside are dirtied and damaged

without making invocation prayers, the encroacher would fall sick and by loosing one's "vitality", he or she would start to act insane. This sickness is attributed to the spell of evil spirits. So a remedial action called "*la kukni* or *yong-raley* (in Tshangla dialect) must be conducted to appease the possessor with some offerings. This "*la kuk*" or "*Yong-raley*" is a special ritual that summons or reinstates the loss of feared life force.

During the ritual, the *la kukmi* would collect varieties of twigs especially of *khenpa shing* (*Artemisia*; *merangma shing* in Tshangla dialect) from the precise direction indicated by the astrologer or a palmist. Based on the word and timing, he/she would shake the twigs over the patients head as he/she whistles with certain tunes. It is either white spider (*yong baling mo*) or black spider (*yong chang lu*) falling on the patient's head that is identified as the lost soul. If it is the black spider, it is considered difficult for the patient and will take time for the patient to recover. But if it is the white spider falling from the twigs, the lost soul is considered to be recovered.

Phajo/Bonpo: *Phajo* is a shaman who performs propitiation according to Bon tradition while a *bonpo* is he who believes and practices Bon religion. Although there are phajos in Bhutan they are not bonpos, because Phajos receive and practice the teachings of the Buddha from Buddhist Lamas and are not dedicated to practising Bon as a religion.

So, the phajos deal with certain classes of local spirits that harm people. They do not go into trance but recite specific prayers to drive away evils that cause harm. Besides being carried out as healing ritual, it is also carried out as part of bi-annual or annual ritual performance to propitiate deity in order to bring harmony to the community. Performing rituals by a phajo is particularly common in central and western Bhutan and the practice varies from place to place. They make their ritual altar/shrine with grains such as wheat or buckwheat being set up in layers on which they place ritual cakes. The rituals usually start with burning branches and twigs as incense (*sang*). Then, accompanied by the rythm of drums, they chant prayers inviting deities. Not everyone can be a phajo. The practice is usually a family heritage and taught to a child from the early years, except in some rare cases.

Doenchoe (*gdon mchod*) literally means propitiating or expelling evil force/spirit. It is an emergency healing process. It is practiced when one gets ill suddenly. The leftover food in the house is collected and then together with *sur* (smoke created by a mixture of butter and wheat flour), and offered to the evil spirit instructing with pleasing words not to harm and leave the place. Anyone can do *doenchoe* anywhere when required but there are few who are specialized in it. There is no particular process to practice this healing [for more details see Chapter –I, the Oral Expressions].

4.3. HEALING PRACTICES & LOCAL HERBS

There are various indigenous methods to treat diseases by using locally available herbs. The practioners or healers usually do not have any sorts of formal training, but rather, a few claims to gain these skills in their dream state. Some of them are said to have learnt the skills orally from a master. Then with practice and experience, they learn to locate the diseases by feeling the nerves of the body with their fingers.

Some of the following plants and methods are considered to be more effective for treating ailments ranging from common cold to chronic diseases such as sinusitis, arthritis, rheumatism, liver problems and diseases related to digestive and nervous system.

Jaundice:

- *Peru Lara* in Lhotshampa language – is a kind of creeper. Drinking the juice of this vine or chewing it is known to cure jaundice.

Nose bleed:

- The seeds of *kappa* (in Dzongkha) and *mowan* (in Tshangla dialect) (bot. *gossypium* sp.) are used to stop nose bleed and also heals nose disorders.

Fever:

- The seeds of *chassee* (Sow. *mkhal ma zho sha nag po*; Bot. *Erythriana aroborescens*; *kharshing* in Tshangla dialect) are used as agent for reducing fever.







- The fleshy part of the fruit called *amla* in Dzongkha and *chugorngshey* in Tshangla dialect (*Phyllanthus sp.*) is known to cure fever.

Sinusitis and Headache:

- *Pinashey lara* in Lhotsham dialect is a green climber. If it is rubbed and inhaled it is known to cure sinusitis and headache. It has got prickly smell.
- Puti shing (*kuri* in Lhotsham dialect) – Root of this plant is brewed and consumed or can be chewed. It's used to treat headache.

Diarrhoea and Dysentery:

- The bark of *shing dzae* (Sow. *Shing tsha*; Bot. *Cinnamomum sp.*) acts as an anti-diarrheal agent and also restores stomach heat.
- *Drag-zhun* (Sow. *Brag-zhun*) in Dzongkha literally means melt of the rock. It is extracted from cliffs and it is hard like rock when raw but can be processed. Some people boil it in water for a long time and drink it as tonic when they get diarrhoea. But people usually boil it, mix it with milk and honey and drink it to treat malaria, dysentery and scabies. The substance can cure allergies, enhance sex drive and stop nose bleeding.
- The seed of gourd which is called *ku* in Dzongkha and *chong* in Tshangla dialect (Sow. *Kabed*; Bot. *Lagenaria sp.*) is used for treating diarrhoea and dysentery.
- The acorns of *sisi shing* in Dzongkha and *Beynangshing* in Tshangla dialect (Sow. *Mon chha ra*; Bot. *Quercus griffithii*) cure dysentery.
- The whole plant of *tharam* in Dzongkha and *Tiktsa* in Tshangla dialect (*Plantago depressa*) cures diarrhoea.
- Lemon & Onion – drinking the juice of these two mixtures helps to treat vomiting and diarrhoea.

Blood pressure:

- *Hala lay* - shrub/weed is known to cure blood pressure.

Hand and leg cut:

- The juice extracted after crushing the *beetle leaves*



(locally known as *shing pan* in Tshangla dialect) is used to apply on the cut in hands and legs to stop bleeding from the cut. *Assam dama* and *khenpa* are also used to clot the blood to prevent excessive bleeding.

- The juice of *bangla rokpa* and *merangma* in Tshangla dialect are used to stop bleeding. This tradition is still happening but more people depend on science due to the development of health facilities.



Wound and boil:

- The grind mixture of *tiktsa*, *tsashog* and *bangla rokpa* in Tshangla dialect covered with a *chamela* (leaves) in Tshangla is heated and used to treat boils and any swollen parts of the body.
- The whole plant *pangtshen puru* (Sow. *spangtshen spuru*; Sc. *Eriophyton wallichii*) heals wounds or infections in the lung, and relieves associated fever.



It also regenerates and strengthens torn nerves, ruptured blood arteries and veins.

Stomach ache:

- *Alanchi* (Sow. *kakola*, bot. *Amomum Subulatum*) is used to restore stomach heat and aids in digestions.
- Seeds of *Sendu* (Sow. *se 'bru*; Eng. *pomegranate*) and (*Thalem* in Tshangla, Kheng, Shar dialects) heal stomach disorders.
- *Rimen* (Tshangla) – a creeper, whose roots are ground, boiled and drunk either hot or cold is known to cure stomach ache.
- The leaves and flowers of *chu kar meto* (Rheum *Nobile*) is used as evacuation of bowels, increase urination and prevents vomiting. It is also used to control swelling and sensation in the stomach and helps to retain body fluid.
- The aerial parts of *luru marpo* (Sow. *Lugru dmarpo*; Bot. *Pedicularis megalantha*) are used as an antidote and also to cure intestinal disorders.



Cleansing Effect:

- It is believed that the tender leaves of *zocha* (stinging nettle) cooked like spinach has cleansing effect.

Malaria:

- The seed of *tsampaka* in Dzongkha and *Namkaling* in Tsangla dialect (*Oroxylum indicum*) is used as anti-malarial and also to reduce fever.
- *Num* – the root of a plant smaller than orange tree but having broader leaves is brewed and consumed to treat malaria.

- *Khe-ru* – smells like human excreta. This creeper is put around the neck of people as well as around the neck of horse to prevent malaria.
- *A-bi-ja-lo* in Lhotsham language – this plant grows in small forest and spreads its root on the surface of the earth and does not grow in height. It is green and has round leaf. One can inhale the odour it produces when burnt. It is usually used by Lhotshampas.

Giddiness:

- *Zati* (Bot. *Myristica fragrans*) is used to treat giddiness, and insomnia. It also calms heart disorders.



- Sweets or candy extracted from *guncha* in Dzongkha and *khomin* in Tshangla dialect (*Saacharum officinarum*) calms nausea, and giddiness.
- *Lung mom-dang* in Tshangla dialect – it grows on stone at higher altitude, which is like a moss. The smell of the plant is inhaled or it can be eaten as well to cure giddiness.

Leprosy:



- The root, leaves and flowers of *tshendug* (Sow. *Bong nga nagpo*; Bot. *Aconitum laciniatum*) cures leprosy, chronic infection and gout. It also allays bone diseases and also used for expelling worms.

Tooth ache:

- *Doma* (*Area catechu*) is known to strengthen gum and teeth. It also cures kidney disorders.

Typhoid:

- *Tul-si-pat* in Lhotsham dialect – this is a domestic plant raised by Lhotshampa people in their front yard. Firstly, it is believed that if leaf is eaten, it cures typhoid. Secondly, if juice of the leaf is taken out and applied on eyes, it heals eye pain.

Cough and Cold, Sore Throat and Chest Pain:

- The bark of *tshema tshelu* in Dzongkha and *sergong* in Tshangla dialect (*Rubia sp.*) is known to heal common cough and cold.
- Boil turmeric power (*haldi*) in salty water. Gargle it and spit out the water. It cleans throat and cures cold.
- The flower of *tsa atrong* (Med. *rtsa akrong*; bot. *Arenaria kansuensis*) cures lung disorders and pus above chest including head.
- The juice of a *khempa shing* has an interesting smell and bitter in taste. When people suffer from cough and cold they boil the leaves of the plant and drink. It is very bitter but believed to cure cough and cold.



- *Pangen Meto* (Sowa. *spang rgyan sngonpo*; Bot. *Gentiana Algida*) usually grown in high altitude and is used to treat cough and cold.
- *Cordysep* called *yar tsa guen bu* (Sow. *dbyar rtsa dgun 'bu*; Bot. *Cordyceps sinensis*) is used to treat sore throat. It is also useful not only for kidney disorders but also optimizes spermatogenesis. It is made into tonic which helps to relieve fever arising from lung disorders. It also regulates blood pressure (high and low), and improves function of lungs and kidneys.

Gastritis:

- Consuming ginger roots reduces the severity of constipation and gastritis.

Production of Breast Milk:

- If the new mother is short of milk, drinking *ju-wa-no* (fenugreek) which looks similar to coriander but comparatively smaller than it is believed to increase the yield of milk.

Blood purification:

- *Chi-ra-ta* – (*khalu* in Tshangla dialect) soak the plant in water and drinking it every morning is believed to keep our body healthy, especially helps to purify blood.

Dog bite:

- When bitten by a dog – collect red soil or clay and knead into dough-like mixture with the help of water. Apply the dough in pieces over the bitten part. After sometime, it will bring out the hairs of the dog that had bitten. The mud will fetch black hair if the rabid dog is black in colour and so on. After which, it will cure the patient from rabies.

Setting broken bones and joints:

- Fresh juice of *bar-tsee* in Tshangla dialect (*Acorus Calamus*) is also applied to dislocations and fractures, and also used as laxative.
- The seed of *khaesey* in Tshangla language and *tago* (*star go*) in Dzongkha (*Juglans sp.*) straighten and align crooked limbs and allays stiffness of limbs.

- An aerial part of *a-jab* (Bot. *Aster diplostephioides*) is used to join and heal fractured skull. It also helps to reduce fever, swelling, inflammation and pain especially in the upper part of the body.



Local healers also examine and feel the nerves and the broken parts of the bone, and start massaging it. Then turn the affected part to clockwise and then anti-clockwise direction until one hears a cracking sounds. Those ardent believers of local healers (*menpa*) talk about the performance of miraculous healing. Si-ka-ri la-ha-ro –a vine found in thick forest is also used for fractured joints or broken bones.

Traditional Treatment for Animals

While the above plants and methods are used to treat

human ailments, the following methods are applied to treating animals:

- The materials required for treating sick pig were miktang (fire), axe and rope. The rope is tied to the axe where fire is tied to the end of the axe. Then it is tied to the pig sty (*gordong*). This used to be practiced in eastern Bhutan and this is believed to cure sick pig.
- Buckwheat porridge is used to cure a sick cow.
- In olden days, people used to boil the stem of a climber called dakor (in Tshangla) and extract its juice which, if cooled and fed to the cow, helps to cure the dysentery of a cow.



4.4. INDIGENOUS METEOROLOGY

How did our forefathers perceive or predict the weather condition during their times?

Traditional Bhutanese knowledge of weather is related to the interrelationships between humans and spiritual powers. Knowledge about the weather was something founded on shared local experiences. Elderly people claim that weather prediction during their times was based upon a particular system of knowledge and set of beliefs about the nature.

In the olden days there was a common belief that the phenomenal world was inhabited by a host of spiritual beings and deities and must be acknowledged in relation to the areas of human activity. Various human actions were believed to affect the local weather. For instance, it is believed that destroying the forest would

pollute the environment and thus harm the *neydag* and *zhidag* (local guardian deities). It is said that the pollution created by the burning of solid waste could provoke the fury of *lha* in the sky. Thus, there are some weather-making or weather controlling rituals (weather rituals) which existed in the traditions for the purposes of inviting rain during the times of drought, prevention of frost and hail.

Bhutanese conceived all aspects of weather like rain, snow, sunshine, cloud, and hail by looking at the sky, signs, noise from animals and insects, and personal experiences. It comes in the form of the following beliefs:

- When cloud moves in the easterly direction, rain is expected and if it moves with greater speed, then the strong wind is expected.

- If there are stars in the sky, it is predicted to have a clear sky the next day, if not, then it is believed to have rain the next day.
- If reddish color cloud appears in the morning, there would be rain or snow fall that day.
- If the streaks of clouds appear in orange colour in the south, sun is expected the next day.
- If one experiences a body or joint pain, then he would say that the weather will be gloomy and might rain any time.
- If one feels thirsty or very dry without any reason, it is likely that the following day will be a sunny day.
- When nose bleeds, it is believed to rain.
- If cows are seen dancing, then it is known to rain the next day and it snows when calf moos.
- If the frogs croak any time of the day, it brings rain or believes that it is going to rain.
- When *chiligpa* (*khen* bird) chirps while raining heavily, it signifies sunshine and vice versa.
- Crackling of bamboo indicates dry weather.
- They also judge the weather by the direction of the smoke from anywhere. If the smoke goes up the mountain side, fine weather is expected and if it moves down towards the lower elevations, bad weather is predicted.

4.5. INDIGENOUS ARITHMETIC

The indigenous system of numerical reading begins with *chig* (one) and goes on as the Roman numerical counting.

Long before when there were no numbers to represent or had modern means of calculation, Bhutanese used fingers, pebbles and stones, sticks, rosary beads to represent numbers. The counting goes till *khey chig* (twenty) and on every count of twenty they use one stone. And the counting goes on:

khey chig (20x1)	- khe chig (20)
khey khechig (20x20)	- nyi shu chig (400)
khey nyi shu chig (20x400)	- kheychen chig (8,000)
khey khechen chig (20x8000)	- yangchen chig (160,000)
Pched	- a half
Pched dang nyi	- one and a half
Ched dang sum	- two and a half
sum cha chig	- one third
zhi cha chig	- one fourth
nga cha chig	- one fifth and so on

4.6. ASTROLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Bhutanese follow lunar calendar to keep track of time and the events in their day to day activities. Moon cycle goes through its phases from New Moon, quarter moon, Full Moon, and back to new moon in a period that lasts one month (30 days). Some lunar days depending on the shape of the moon especially the full moon day is considered to be auspicious to perform meritorious activities.

Astrology

Astrology or *Kartsi Rigpa* (*skar rtsi rigpa*) plays an important part in the life of the Bhutanese, who believe that supernatural powers, both good and evil, as well as the stars and planets, exert a profound influence on human life. The Bhutanese turn to astrology not only to understand these influences, but also to avoid potentially unfavourable times and heighten the effects of favorable periods.

Thus, the Bhutanese will consult astrologers on the birth of a child (*ke tsi*), a marriage in the family (*bag tsi*), prior to the construction of a house, to ascertain the auspicious hours for a funeral (*shin tsi*), and for numerous other purposes like promotion, start of a new journey, etc. Horoscopes also cast at the beginning of each year to have a forecast of the year's ill-fortunes and to determine appropriate remedies (*lomoi-tsi*). The 12 year signs, the Eight Trigrams, the Nine Numeric Squares, the Nine Planets and the 28 constellations are all interpreted according to their elemental properties of Wood, Fire, Earth, Iron and Water, and their effects on a person is thereby calculated according to their influences.

Since astrology is closely linked to astronomy, both occupy a position of honour in traditional Bhutanese scholarship. While Bhutanese astrology is derived from the Indian system (*kar tsi*), its astronomy is of Chinese origin (*nag tsi*).

The evolution of the unique Bhutanese system known as *Thunmongi Tsizhi* owes itself to Kuenkhen Padma Karpo, one of the great spiritual masters of the Drukpa Kargyu tradition. It was formally adopted in the seventeenth century, after Lama Lhawang Lodroe, the chief tutor of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, meditatively authenticated its veracity at Cheri Dorjedhen, the initial seat of the Drukpa Kargyu tradition in Bhutan.

The twelve year animal signs emanating from the twelve interdependent happenings that begins with the mouse and ends with the pig have been paired up with the five elements such as earth, water, fire, wind and wood. Again, each of these elements must repeat until all the twelve year animal signs have a chance to become, say, earth mouse. Then this pair is also identified as a male and female, like male earth mouse or a female earth mouse. This completes a sixty-year cycle which is also called *rab-jung*.

In sixty-year cycles, the names of years consist of a combination of one of these animals and one of the five elements of wood, fire, earth, iron and water, which in turn is associated with a pair of animals, the first of which is male and the second female. Thus, one year may be designated Male Iron Mouse Year and another as Female Iron Ox Year. Bhutanese astrological calculations assign specific meaning to each of these various elements and animals.

Due Zhi (Four Seasons)

Just as the four seasons are enjoyed in most countries of the world, Bhutan also shares the four natural seasons perfectly dissipated throughout the year in the country. The group of months forming one particular season is however calculated based on the lunar readings on the Bhutanese calendar. It is not entirely different from the western style of calculations but sometimes the seasons in Bhutan are ahead by a month or two or fall behind by a month or two compared to the western calendar readings.

Sokha (Spring)

The 2nd, 3rd and the 4th months are basically considered *sokhai due* or the season of spring. Generally, this is the most pleasant season of the year. The flowers start to pop out their bud making the whole environment picturesque and fresh. Nevertheless, this is the time when farmers start to prepare for the big tasks awaiting summer. They prepare their farmlands for paddy transplantations. It is understood that farmers plough their fields pre-summer so that the soil remains soft and

ready for paddy seedlings. Various vegetables are also planted during this time of the year. In the olden days, this used to be a season of scarcity as their previous crops have been used up and the new crop has just been sown in the soil.

Bja/yar da (Summer)

Bja/yarda or the summer season is the busiest time for farmers. The farmers are involved most intensely in paddy cultivation. Farmers have to keep their fields continuously watered day in and day out. Rice is the most important staple food for every Bhutanese. From times immemorial, Bhutanese have always been self-sufficient in staple food especially rice and maize. Bhutan's produce are all organic and due to the favorable climatic conditions, rice is said to be liked by overseas consumers while organic vegetable produce are in high demand in the domestic market. Bhutan also exports apple, potatoes and oranges in substantial quantities to countries like India and Bangladesh. Therefore, the farmers make the most of summer. The 5th, 6th and the 7th month are considered the summer months on the Bhutanese calendar. One of the most important factors in a successful summer for the rural people is the timely monsoon rains for better yield.

Serkha or Toenka (Autumn)

The fall or autumn season is basically preparing for the cold winter. It starts off with the collection of late blooming crops and vegetables. Stock-piling of fodder for the livestock are also actively carried out during this season. Planning for excursions to cities, pilgrimage, migration or visiting relatives also takes place during the later part of autumn season. Villagers also go to the forest to collect firewood to heat their homes during the impending cold winter. The 8th, 9th and the 10th months make up the autumn season of the year on the Bhutanese calendar.

Guen da (Winter)

The 11th, 12th months and the 1st month of the New Year collectively form the winter season. During the earlier part of this month, farmers usually prepare manure by collecting fallen foliage gathered from the ground. Winter months are cold and snowfall is expected during this season particularly at mid altitudes and above. Therefore, farmers are less active in their fields and more into travelling to warmer places while some families embark on sacred pilgrimage. However, the ones who choose to stay back in the village normally have to look after the cattle.

4.7. INDIGENOUS MEASURING UNITS

4.7.1. Measurement of Weight

Almost every household owns a measuring bowl called *dre* (*bre*) mainly used for transactions of grains for the purpose of paying tax (in kind), bartering, sales and loans. *Dre* is a cylindrical vessel of about 11cm high and 16 cm in diameter made of bamboo and wood. As the bowl made of bamboo differed in sizes, the Royal Government made a standard one and distributed to all households in the 1960s. There is a smaller version of the bowl called *phueta* (*phud-ta*) about one-fifth of the *dre* in capacity. In Tshangla dialect *dre* is called *khaw* and *phueta* is called *lamshu*.

Some are plain bamboo with wooden base while others are decorated with brass, copper or metal bands on the edges. Some especially the *dre* has leather strap with a metal or bamboo ring attached so that it is hung onto a peg or nail when not in use. *Dre* is still in use for selling rice and flour by farmers in the market.

Types of Dre

There are five different types of *dre* used for measuring grains:

- i) **Chag dre** (metal vessel): one *cha dre* is equivalent to five *phutas* of grain.
- ii) **Toe dre** (from Toebesa): one *toe dre* is equal to four *phutas* of grain.
- iii) **Tsho dre**: it is usually used by the monks in the dzongs. It can contain four *phutas* of grain.

iv) **Pa dre**: it is a *dre* from Paro and is of two types, *Dru dre* and *Thob dre*. *Dru dre* has the capacity of six *phueta* is the standard *dre* to paying debts to the government and payment of wage for the labour. *Thob dre* contains seven *phueta*s and is the standard *dre* when borrowing grain.

v) **Gyaltsi Kharlowa**: this is a standard *dre* supplied by the Ministry of Finance to resolve the problem of different standards used in different regions of the country in the past. One *gyaltsi kharlowa (dre)* is equivalent to five *phueta*s.

One *phueta* is equivalent to 333 grams while one *dre* is equivalent to 1.67 kilos.

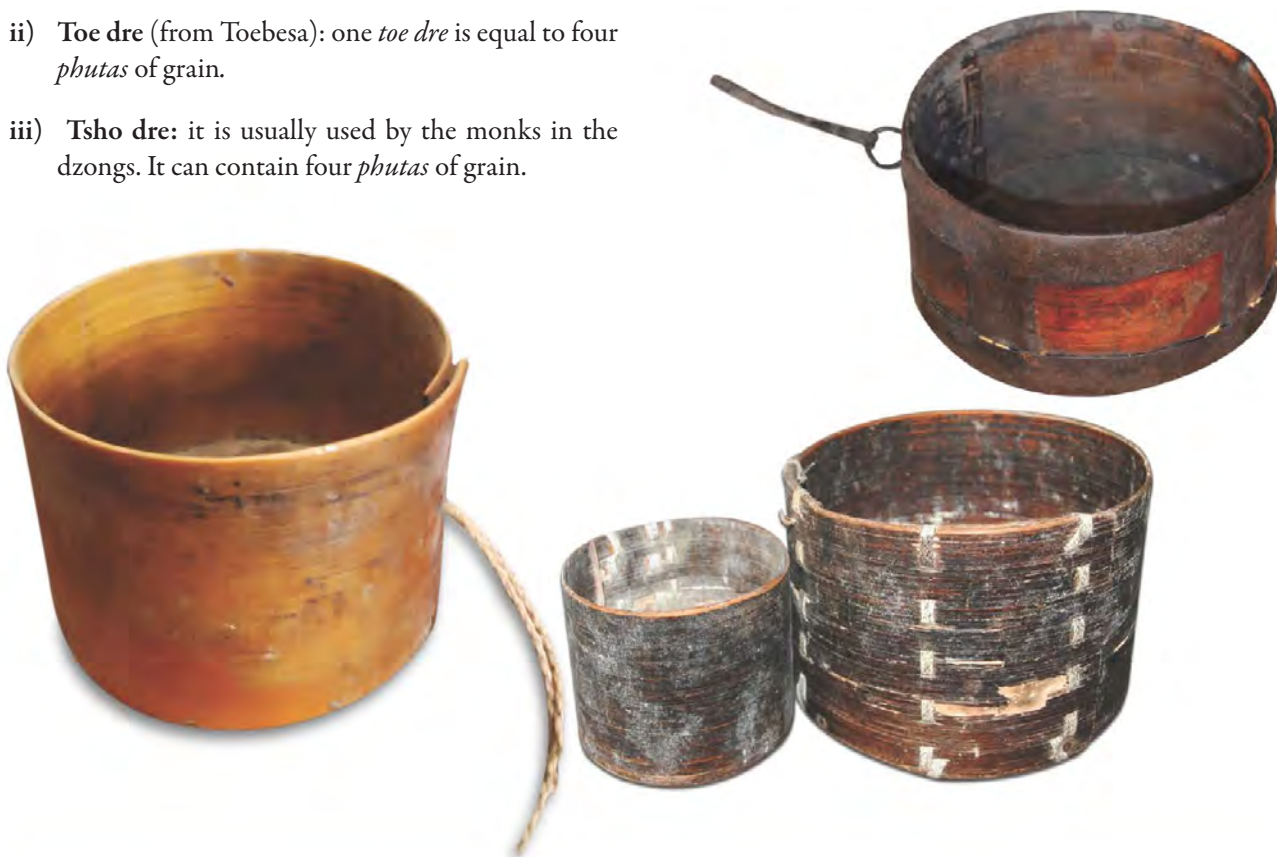
The following are the standard system of calculation using the *dre*.

20 *dre* equivalent to *dre khey chig* (20 *dre* of grains)

20 *dre khey* is equivalent to *nyi shu chig* (400 *dre* of grains)

20 *nyi shu* is equivalent to *kheychen chig* (800 *dre* of grains)

20 *kheychen* is equivalent to *yangchen chig* (16000 *dre* of grain)



Weighing Scale

Sang and *Goe* are the standard weighing scales used in olden days. They are used even to this day in villages.

Sang: It is a weighing scale used for weighing small amount of substance like butter, meat, vegetable, wool and yarn. Its unit is roughly equivalent to 333 grams.

3 Sang = 1 kilogram (3:1).

Goe: This is another scale used for weighing larger amounts of grain, meat, butter, and cheese. One *goe* is equal to six *sang*.

1 *Goe* = 2 kilogram.

These scales are with a stick with notches cut into it to indicate the amount of measurement. A stone or a piece of metal is stitched into leather pocket and attached a leather strap (like the hammer throw in Olympic Games) which is suspended on a metal ring which can be moved back and forth between the notches. A piece of square shaped leather has its four corners joined to four thin leather straps that are

fixed at one end of the stick. To weigh, one places the object in the square leather container and moves the ring that bears the weight of the stone back and forth till the stick holds steady in a horizontal position. The point or notch on which the ring has landed shows the weight of the object. If the ring stays between two notches, the object of measurement are either added or taken away. Today, this instrument is hardly used due to the availability of more accurate weighing instruments.

Tiru Sangchung: It is a traditional scale used by silversmiths for weighing gold, silver, brass, and copper. It is made of metal and comparatively smaller in size than *sang*. Locally the weight of any metal equal to 11.66 grams is called one *tiru* or one *tola*.

4.7.2. Measurement of Time

In olden days, calendars, watches and clocks were hardly known or heard, yet the precision of time was an important factor to carry out auspicious activities. Thus, they solely depended on the position of the sun in the sky, and the sounds of animals and birds.



- **Timing based on the position of the sun:** if your shadow falls right on your feet when you stand, then it is considered to be noon (*gung*).
- The first crowing of the rooster is considered to be around 2-3 a.m (the time of Ox sign in the lunar calendar called *che-yoe lang* (*phyed yol glang*) while the second crowing is around 3-4 a.m at dawn (the time of Tiger sign called *thorang tag* (*tho rangs stag*), and so on. However, if the rooster crows in the middle of the night (around 12 p.m to 1 a.m), it is considered to be a bad omen. This is believed to be the time when the malevolent spirits are awake.

4.7.3. Measurement of Length and Distance

In the past and even today where measuring instruments are not available, there is a very unique measuring style where people used their body part as the measuring scale. The following are the equivalent measurement:

- *Sor gang* = one width of the thumb



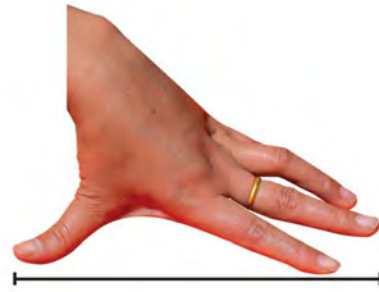
- *Gi gang* = from stretched tip of thumb to the bent end of index finger.



- *Cha tho gang* = from stretched tip of thumb to the end of index finger



- *Tho gang* = from the outstretch tip of middle finger to the tip of the thumb



- *Lag gang* = the breadth of a palm



- *Chu gang* = from tip of elbow to the tip of middle finger



- *Dom gang* = from the tip of the middle finger of one hand to the tip of the middle finger of the other hand with both arms fully stretched.



- *Zhudom* = A bow length
- *Dajang* = A distance of archery range (c 140 meters)
- *Jangdrak* = A distance of about 500 zhudom.
- *Pagtshed* (yojana) = 4000 zhudom (About 4.5 miles (7.4 km)/ league

4.7.4. Measurement of Area

Land was measured on the basis of *lang dor* (*glang dor*). One *lang dor* is usually equivalent to land ploughed by a pair of oxen in a day. One *lang dor* on dry land is approximately a third of an acre = 1350m², and one *lang dor* on wetland is approximately a quarter of an acre = 1012m².

4.7.5. Measurement of Volume

Although there is no standard unit for measurement of volume it was measured according to the size of the particular container. While *pala*, *dop*, *zo*, *kuo*, *damji*, etc. are used to measure the volume of liquid, *bangchung*,



luep, *lagchung*, etc. are used to measure the volume of grains and cereals. Those containers were also used for storage purpose and transportation.

4.8. FOLK BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITION

Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines "beliefs" as a strong feeling that something or somebody exists or is true, while the "superstition" as a belief which is not based on reasons or science, but is a mental construct. It is said that the "beliefs have guided human conduct and shaped behavior and action in unique ways in different culture." According to T. Powdyel's foreward note in "*Ta She Gha Chaa*" although superstitions and beliefs are often subjected to ridicule and considered as lacking rationale, popular beliefs are a window to the inner life of the community and a society. They express the workings of the psychological, emotional and spiritual world of communities in their attempt to explain the world around them. Examples of some aspects of beliefs and superstitions given below:

4.8.1. Signs and Omens

Examples:

- **Wooden Phallus** - It is a common sight to see four wooden phalluses hanging from each of the four corners of the roof of a traditional house, and one at the main entrance or front wall. It is considered a "mascot" or a "talisman". Bhutanese believe that this phallus will help to ward off the *mikha* (malicious gossip or curse which is believed to cause harm or bring bad luck or suffering to the house). A child too may wear a tiny wooden phallus or even a calf can wear one around its neck to ward off the influence of evil spirits.
- The villages will be hesitant to give away their paddy on Fridays since they believe that the luck associated with the good harvest will be taken away by the person who receives the paddy. Friday is believed to be a day of fortune.
- The metallic items represent permanence, power and indestructibility. So if you come across any rusted safety pin or any metallic items you should pick it up and preserve them. When you pass on any metallic items to others, you should place it on the floor or surface without passing it directly.
- When a household goes through material loss like money, gold or any valuable belongings, it is believed that one's illness will go away. However, if the lost gold ornament like a finger ring is retrieved, it signifies ill happenings which may befall the family or any member.
- While embarking on a journey, if one encounters a person with an empty container at the starting point, it is an indication that the mission would fail or there would be obstacles. It is advisable to stay back and plan ones trip for another day which may be more favorable, so as to evade the ill omen. However, if one encounters filled containers, cattle or langur on the way, it is considered to be auspicious and indication of success.
- Belt, knife and rosary are of great spiritual value – *sung-kyi*. Therefore, no one should walk over them or place garments used for lower part of the body and brooms over them. Therefore, it is believed that if someone has got stomach ache, whipping with belt will cure as it is believed to have been caused by evil spirits.
- Whistling inside the house especially at night is discouraged as it is believed to invite ghost and evil spirits. Shamans whistle to gather spirits during their performances.

4.8.2. Beliefs and Superstition concerning flowers

Examples:

- When the plants or flowers are sown by children, they are believed to grow better since the budding power of the child is infused to the plants, compared to those sown by adults.
- If we plant the flowers which are stolen from others, they are believed to bloom better.
- In Bhutan, flowers represent both beauty and sacredness. So, if you grow lots of flowers and offer them at the altars, or at sacred sites, you will be blessed with beautiful children at present and you will be reborn as a beautiful person in the next birth.
- If the plants and flowers grow very well, the person who planted them is said to have “green fingers.”

4.8.3. Beliefs and Superstition on Animals

Examples:

- The generic name given to big black snake is *buemen* which literally means “no snake” but bad omen. So, seeing such a reptile is considered ill-luck and misfortune will strike the person or his/her family. It is believed to be the messenger of death which has assumed the form of snake to frighten you and scatter away your soul. The soul once scattered will have to be consolidated and strengthened. For this, a special ritual *la kug* (ref. earlier section on this topic) is performed to restore the soul and to ward off such misfortune. In this ritual, a replica of the snake is made with dough and left outside facing the direction/site of the place where the snake was encountered.
- If a dog, especially of your own, howls throughout the night or dig a hole in the ground around your house, it is considered a bad omen. It is believed that they can sense an impending disaster, which makes them cry.
- If a cat licks its front paws and then wipes its face, it announces the arrival of guest at home.
- Brawling of cats is considered bad omen as it is believed that cats fight over the spirits of dead people.
- If a black cat crosses the road when you are making a

journey, it indicates ill omen. It could be a failure of your mission or obstacles could occur.

- If an owl hoots, it is just a call to the beaver to bring food but hearing it laugh is ominous and warns of death. Again, if owl is seen in the morning or afternoon, it is believed that ill-luck will befall the family. Therefore, the Bhutanese call an owl, the bird of bad omen.

4.8.4. Beliefs and Superstition concerning Pregnant Women

Examples:

- Different kinds of food the pregnant woman dreams of are taken to symbolize the sex of the unborn child. For example, dreaming of pumpkin, turnips and peaches are believed to indicate the child as female while dreaming of radish and pear indicate the birth of a son.
- It is also believed that when a pregnant woman menstruates during her pregnancy the baby born to her will be the reincarnation of a renowned lama or a celebrant since the baby is believed to be cleaned and purified in her womb.
- If the pregnant women has made the bed wet unconsciously in her sleep for the first time, it signifies that the child born will be rich and successful.
- During her pregnancy the woman should not dye her hair as it means the mother is stealing the baby's fairness.
- Sex of a baby is felt by the movement in the womb. If the movement is felt more on the left it is a sign of a baby girl and conversely if the movement is on the right side the child will be a boy.
- If the pregnant mother loses her charms and becomes dull the baby is believed to be a girl since the mother's beauty is taken by the baby but if the mother has her glowing looks on her face the baby is believed to be a boy.

4.8.5. Beliefs and Superstition on Children

Examples:

- When the baby is born it is considered to be impure (drip) until the cleansing ceremony is performed early in the morning on the third day after its birth.

It is called *lhabsang* in the local term after which the visitors come with various gifts and cash for the long life of the baby.

- Older people believe that a baby who is in deep sleep should not be kissed on the mouth as the sleep will be disturbed by nightmares.
- If the new born baby sucks the thumb it signifies that the next birth is a baby boy but if it is an index finger then it is a sign of a baby girl.
- If the baby cries loud for days and nights without any illness it foretells the death or illness of the parents.
- Only those children who have completed eight years of life are entitled to be cremated. Otherwise their bodies are either buried in the rivers or kept in isolated caves.

4.8.6. Beliefs and Superstition concerning Human Body Parts

Examples:

- In the Bhutanese society, forehead is considered to be the most critical part of a person. It is believed that the fortune of the person is predetermined in one's forehead. When any good or bad fortune comes to a person the forehead often gets different remarks from other people. It is often believed that a person possessing a good forehead appears awesome and gains natural command over the crowd.
- When you stretch out your thumb, a hollow appears near wrist. The depth of this hollow part indicates the level of devotion to one's parents and family.
- Those who have distinct moles in the corners of the eyes are believed to shed lots of tears. It represents bowl of tears for the suffering that one goes through.
- The grinding of teeth also connects to certain beliefs. When a man grinds his teeth while sleeping it signifies victory over evils, but if a woman does the same it signifies that she is after human blood.
- If there is an unusual growth of hairs on the moles of both men and women you should not pull it out, not even supposed to be touched by their close ones because they symbolize good fortune.
- It is believed that those who have died in accidents

and their limbs went missing; he or she will not be reborn as a whole person in their next life.

4.8.7. Beliefs and Superstition on Days

Examples:

- The early hours of the morning are considered to be the most auspicious for deciding the important activities for the whole day. Therefore, it is important that the family begins the day on the positive note.
- When the morning begins with intense sunshine accompanied with light drizzling of rainfall it is believed be a "mournful day" where nature laments its own sorrow over the death of a human being as humans share a strong bond with nature.
- Among the seven days Monday is believed to be the most significant day to propose or make any important decisions and also to start any business. Even the traditional games like archery and khuru are played on this day.
- The lunar calendar is based on sign of *lokhor chu-nyi* (12 year animal cycle) like the pig, rooster, ox, sheep, dog, horse etc. Each day is associated with one of the astrological signs of animals which ultimately become its own day like the dog day or the rooster day. The significance of each day varies from others. For instance Friday is considered to be inauspicious to travel to far off places as it is believed that the journey would be tough and tiring. Likewise on Saturdays the animals cannot be slaughtered nor can their meat be cooked since the day signifies "red" colour. It is believed to bring death and cause harm to the other animals.
- *Tshe chi* (1st day of the month) is considered to be very inauspicious to cut one's hair and nails or even clothes, whereas *tshe nyi* (2nd day) is considered inauspicious to venture into any new activities, *tshe sum* or 3rd day is considered to be inauspicious to wash one's hair, take bath or wash clothes.
- The most auspicious days are the 8th, 15th and 30th during which most people visit sacred places and offer butter lamps and prayers.

4.8.8. Beliefs and Superstition about Dreams

Examples:

- When one sees bad dream filled with images of dead

body or smeared with blood, it should not be shared with others; rather one should talk to a lonely tree or a boulder so that the ill effects of the dream will be heard by the tree or the boulder and the dreamer is relieved of its effect.

- If one dreams of flowers or plants being seared by the sun or the cold morning frost it signifies bad omen, whereas if we dream of moist or fresh flowers, plants and milk it brings good fortune to that person.
- Dreaming of carrying weapons will keep you protected from your foes and you will be victorious over your enemies. However, if you see yourself being attacked by the weapon or smeared with blood or drowning or witness lightening, these are all signs of danger or hardships.
- If you see cow-dung in your dream it is a sign of good luck and most people have strong belief in this dream. It brings success in whatever work you planned to do.
- Seeing yourself riding on the black horse down hills foretells a bad destiny in your life or family so this should be prevented by seeking help from the lamas but if you dream of riding on a white horse up hills it's a very good sign in fulfilling your wishes.
- When you see yourself attacked by insects or being bitten by animals, this dream signifies getting sick and being prone to diseases.
- If you dream of being covered by human excreta it promises monetary gain in your future.
- If one dreams of riding a white elephant it signifies wealth and good health.
- Dreaming of riding a tiger indicates job promotion; but if you dream of a monkey it warns you of bad days ahead.

4.9. HOUSEHOLD & KNOWLEDGE OF ECONOMY

People in Bhutan used to produce many varieties of goods generally for domestic consumption. In addition to fulfilling their day to day needs, these products had great economic and cultural values. Although there are numerous household objects that vary in quality, size and make from region to region, the scope of this paper allows only a quick view of few examples to illustrate the knowledge and skills that had determined the Bhutanese economy in the past.

Tea Churn

Tea churn or *ja sum* consists of a vessel and a churner, made of wood or bamboo. Some churns are decorated with brass and copper bands embossed or etched with patterns. It has a circular lid decorated with metal. The end of churn handle is often covered with metal ornamentation. Some simpler churns are banded with bamboo strips and sometimes with yak hair cords.



Wooden Container for Storing and Serving Ara

The most commonly used container for storing and serving *ara* (local beverage) is called *jandop*. It is made of wood in a cylinder form. This is often painted in

black and bound with metal bands. These bands have embossed or patterns or incised patterns that range from simple to intricate ones. Today, the *jandom* has been replaced by versatile plastic bottles and containers.



Milk Churn

It is a tall wooden or bamboo made churn, cylindrical with its bottom made of wood (in case of bamboo made). It is used for churning milk to obtain butter and cheese. It has a wooden lid, a wooden paddle/beater to churn the liquid.



Mortar and Pestle

The mortar (*tsiku*) is a receptacle used for pounding and grinding spices with the help of a pestle (*doti*), in





the kitchen. Pestle is a short club like object used for pounding and crushing. It comes in various shapes and is made of various materials like hardwood and stone. In recent years ceramic has come into use.

There is a larger version of mortar and pestle used for pounding rice, maize to make corn flakes and rice flakes. It is also used to make chili powder. The availability of grinding machines has almost eliminated the use of large mortar and pestle from active use.

Mud Oven

Mud oven or *thab* is a box like fireplace made in the corner of the house kitchen with a round opening at the front base for feeding firewood and two or three openings at the top for placing cooking utensils. It is usually made of stone and mud. Black or red soil is used to make the thab with hands along with flat stones. In front of the thab there is a hearth to collect ashes, to warm the food and sometimes for the cat to sleep. It is generally advised to avoid making a thab in the ninth month in lunar calendar as it is bad for the family.

An auspicious day should be selected for making the thab, as all the items like *tsheg* (offering), offered to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and deities are prepared on the thab. Moreover, anyone who partake the food



prepared on the thab invariably offers their food to the triple gems before consuming. Thab is also said to be protected by a female deity called *thab kyi lham*. That is why as the food preparation is completed, a bit of food is also offered to this deity.

Most of the traditional kitchens have a drying rack made directly over the thab. The rack is usually made with strips of wood built into a frame. While some use it for drying fire wood during the wet summer months, others use it for drying vegetables, and meat on the bamboo tray and sometimes hung on these strips.

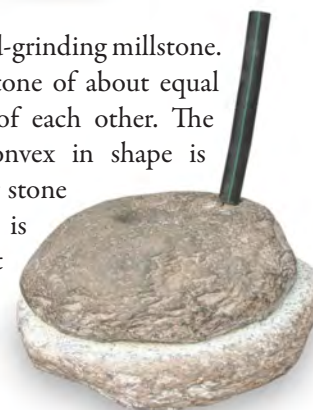
Wooden Trough

Wooden trough (*zhongpa*) is a long, narrow vessel made of a log. A hollow is carved out in the side of a log so that the other side is flattened to keep on the ground. It is of various shapes and size depending on its use. Traditionally, trough is used for storing water for cattle and horse to drink, for feeding the pigs, and also used for dyeing yarns.



Quern

Quern (*rangthag*) is a hand-grinding millstone. It has a pair of circular stone of about equal diameter placed on top of each other. The lower stone which is convex in shape is stationary while the upper stone slightly concave in shape is mobile and rests on a pivot in its center. It works in circular motion to grind the materials. A wooden handle is fixed in the margin of upper stone to turn it round. The grain is placed in a central opening or hopper in the upper stone. It is rotated in a clock wise direction to grind grains. There are usually two persons who sit opposite to each other to work on it.



Pot-stand Ring

Pot-stand ring (*dzekor*) is made from cane or bamboo like a ring. In the early days most households used earthen pot for preparing meals.



These wares were not only rounded at the bottom, they were also easily breakable. Therefore, it was important that the ring like pot stand was used to prevent from breakage and to keep the pot upright. It is used for placing the pots to steady the round bottom of the pot but at the same time keep the soots of the pot off the floor.

Leather-covered Cane Boxes

Leather-covered cane box (*kodrom*) is made of fine rattan and then covered with fine yak hide or cow. It comes in various size and shapes like rectangular, cylindrical and square. It was used at home and also as carrying case while travelling.

Cane Box

Known as *tsharzep*, it is made of rattan. Sometimes it can also be covered by intricate woven textile and usually used while travelling.



Decoration for Mules

In the past, when motor transportation was not even heard of, people relied upon the mules and horses. The caravan of these beasts was known as *khe dre*. Amongst these animals one or sometimes two of the mules used to be decorated with jingles round its neck, red and white yak hair upon its head and a finely made cloth or leather glittering with mirrors covering the front portion of the head called *chel kheb*.



Cylinder Leather Bag

A small bag made of leather or cloth called *chagkhug* which is used for feeding the animal and a long cylindrical leather bag, called *lag khug*, containing the owner's food were added on to the burden in the saddle on long journeys.

Basket (lag chung) and Ladle (zaru)

While Baskets are made of bamboo and is usually small in size, ladles are made of both bamboo and wood. Ladles are plain or may be decorated with relief and open work designs. Sometimes ladles are finely polished or lacquered. This basket is used for holding ladles.

Noodle Maker

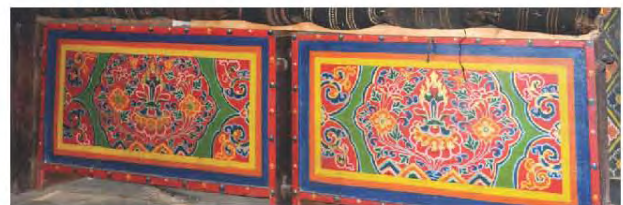
Known as *puta shing*, it is made of wood and used widely in Bumthang for making *puta* (buckwheat/barley noodles). When the handle of this implement is



pushed down, the paste in the central box is squeezed out through the multiple holes in the bottom in the shape of noodles.

Wooden Box

Wooden box is used for storing grains and textiles. While some boxes are plain and simple in design, others have intricate design neatly embossed on it. A well-to-do family also has an elegant looking wooden box reinforced with a brass sheet. It has an elaborate snow lion motif in the front and with flower motifs on both sides.



4.10. TRADITIONAL FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Bhutanese cuisine is varied and every region has its own specialty. Rice is a staple meal with vegetable or meat cooked with chilli and cheese is common across the country. Chili dominates all Bhutanese curry and is considered almost as a vegetable. Therefore, traditional curry is lavishly flavored with either fresh or dried red chillies. The popular Bhutanese cuisines are briefly described below:

Ema Datsi

Ema datsi is chili-cheese curry and most popular in Bhutanese cuisine, and some have even begun to consider it as Bhutan's National Dish. Many Bhutanese claim that their dish is incomplete without *ema datsi*.

Different varieties of chillies may be used: fresh green chilli, sun dried chilli or blanched chilli. Chillies are often used as vegetables than just mere seasoning. It is easier to make *ema datshi*. The ingredients required are fresh green chilli/dried red chillies/blanched chillis, cheese, tomato, onion, garlic (optional), cooking oil and salt and the quantity of the ingredients will depend on one's likings and depending on how one likes to eat. The cheese in *ema datsi* is home-made from the curd of cows or yaks.

Phaksha Pa

Pa is a general term referred to the chunk of stewed meat. In this case, *phaksha pa* is a pork dish well cooked and added dried or blanched chilli to enhance the taste. Spinach or radish can be included. The dish is seasoned with crushed garlic and ginger. Salt, butter or oil forms the most essential part of pork paa.



Nosha Pa

Nosha Pa is a favourite menu for most Bhutanese. It is cooked in the same way as pork paa with the same seasoning.



Kewa Datsi

Kewa Datsi (potatoes with cheese and chilli) is a vegetarian specialty. It is made from potatoes, local cheese, chopped onions and tomatoes (optional), oil, salt, and fresh chilli or red dried chilli depending on one's taste.

There are specialities such as *shamu datsi* (Mushroom with cheese), *nakey datsi* (fiddle head with cheese) among many others.

Jasha Pa

Jasha pa is exquisitely stewed chicken dish. It is cooked very simply by either frying chunks of chicken or boiled evenly and added with chili towards the end. In the olden days, mustard oil was primarily used as cooking oil before the factory-made vegetable oil was available. Dried red chillis are preferred but fresh green chilli can also substitute. Crushed ginger and garlic paste are added to give the curry a good whiff and taste. Also, coriander leaves and (or) spring onion are sprinkled over the cooked dish to give it a green outlook and also to enhance the taste of the curry.

Ribs Pa

Ribs pa is prepared during special occasions like New Year celebrations or dinner parties and social gatherings. Pork ribs are cooked with spices like dried

red chilli and chilli powder sprinkled to make it hot. Fresh radish is also added but potato can be a rare substitute if one cannot find radish at all. If neither radish nor potato are available, dried or sometimes even fresh turnip-tops is also used to complement the ribs. Crushed ginger, garlic and Szechuan pepper are also added to enhance the taste of the dish. Coriander leaves or spring onion are sprinkled over the final dish to add freshness. Pork ribs are preferred to beef ribs.

Kou Pa

Kou is the animal hide roasted dry. Here, the dried skins of cow or yak are edible and considered one of the highly preferred dishes. The roasted hide has to be thoroughly cooked in water until it becomes soft and tender at the touch of fingers. Then it is stir fried in oil with the addition of chili powder, crushed ginger and garlic added to enhance the taste. Spring onion or coriander leaves are added towards the end but it is optional. Crushed Szechuan pepper is also added because of its explosive effect. Yak meat is considered to contain high protein value and is quite expensive.

Kangchung Maru

This is a dish made out of the leg bones (*kangchung*) of animals. The bones are chopped into pieces and cooked for long time until the skin becomes soft. It requires chilli powder to make it hot, crushed ginger and garlic, salt and oil for taste. Nowadays chopped tomatoes are also used to add sourness. This dish basically comes out as a side dish. It is normally served with thin gravy.

Kangchung Pa

The *kangchung pa* is the same material as *kangchung maru*, but it is boiled and then semi-fried with chili, garlic and Sichuan pepper. It is also considered exquisite and is only cooked by a family during special occasions. These days, it is readily available in restaurants with slight modification of tastes inspired by global cuisine. Kangchung paa is usually explosive in taste with chilli powder and Sichuan pepper.

Marsha (Red Meat)

Marsha is fermented red meat of yak. A piece of yak leg is wrapped in a cotton cloth, and kept in a cold place of the house for about five to six months to let it freeze naturally. The best month to preserve this meat is from 8th to 1st months of the lunar year.

Jaju

Jaju is a vegetable curry with lots of thin gravy prepared from freshly chopped green leafy vegetables cooked in a little oil. Fresh local cheese or slightly fermented cheese is the main ingredients in jaju.

The Dumpling of Haa

Buckwheat is one of Haa District's major crops, and the *Haapi Hoentoe* is not to be missed. The buckwheat flour is made into dough, which is then rolled, patted and made into dumplings stuffed with various ingredients like dried leaves of turnip, fresh cheese, garlic and cloves, Sichuan pepper, finely chopped ginger, peeled and coarsely grated onion, hot chilli powder and unsalted butter. These ingredients are mixed and ground before filling in the dumpling. It is then steam cooked until the dough becomes tender. Dipping the dumpling in spicy pepper sauce is a special treat as it numbs the tongue.



Jangbuli

Jangbuli is noodle made from ka (wheat flour) in Bumthang and some parts of Mongar districts and bears the local name. The wheat flour is kneaded and sliced into flat noodles which is boiled to cook and then fried in mustard oil, butter or vegetable oil. Numerous spices like garlic, chilli and dried Szechuan pepper are grounded and added to the dish along with coriander and onion leaves. Sometimes eggs are also added to improve the richness. Jangbuling is usually accompanied by *thrami* (local name for chilli sauce) cooked as curry. Whey (a by-product of cheese) makes a perfect beverage to complete the dish.

Drengo

Buckwheat, barley, wheat, maize and millet flour (*khala*, *guntshong*, *bong*, *kongpu* respectively in *tshangla* dialect) are cooked in pre-boiled water for a few minutes and then kneaded with the help of slightly flattened pestle called *drengo*. *Drengo* used to be the main food

for farmers in the eastern half of Bhutan when rice was in short supply. This item can go with any vegetable curry except fried ones and ezay (chili salad).

Buckwheat Pancake and Noodle

Putu is a replica of noodle made from buckwheat in Bumthang and Trongsa. Buckwheat flour is kneaded into dough with the right thickness and squeezed into a wooden box with multiple holes manually and comes out as noodles at the bottom. It is then prepared in the same manner as Jangbuli (described above) and served. In accordance with the preference it can be served fried or fried and mixed with thin curds. This is a popular dish in few restaurants in the urban centres.



Khule is also made from buckwheat flour. The flour is mixed with water and stirred into thick liquid or batter. The liquid is then poured evenly over a hot griddle or pan. When one side is dried, it is turned on the other side and left until cooked.

Preserved Cheese

Preserved yak cheese popularly known as *zoe thue* is made in Merak and Sakteng communities of Trashigang district where its local name is *chora nyingba*. The cheese is filled in the leather bag especially of a sambar deer skin and is preserved at room temperature for long period



of time. It is used in small amounts to add flavour to curries.

Kharang

Kharang is coarsely ground granules of maize. Traditionally, maize is ground in quern/stone hand mill (rang thag) as explained earlier, where it gives two different products – coarse particles which is *kharang* and the fine flour. These two products are separated with the help of a large bamboo sieve. *Kharang* produced out of wheat is called Bongkharang. Maize *kharang* is usually



eaten mixed with rice or whole *kharang* in those places where there is lack of rice. Maize flour is used to make dough known as *drengo*. This flour is also used to make corn flour porridge. *Kharang* is the most important food crop especially in eastern and south central Bhutan.

Tea Leaf

Bhutanese people used to make indigenous tea leaves from various types of locally available plants, blossoms and leaves. These include the blossoms of *Malus*



Sikkimensis, the late autumn leaves of the *yalei tree* (*Sorbus Cuspidata*), parasitic plant called *yumshing*.

These leaves, blossom and barks are heated in ash water in a frying pan, stirring until all the liquid dries up. Ash water is made by seeping water through the ash collected in a small basket. The oxidation process turns the colour of the materials into dark brown. The boiled leaves and bark are put in a sieve and kept under tap water to wash down all traces of ashes. While churning the tea, ash water may be added to allow the oxidation process to take place to attain the desired color and taste. The tea leaf, however, is good only for *suja* (churned in butter and salt).

Rice Flakes

In the western parts of the country such as Wangduephodrang, Punakha and Paro people produce *jaa sip* or rice flakes from paddy harvested before they are fully matured. The unhusked paddy is boiled and then put in a basket to drain out the water. Then it is once again roasted in a pan and pounded in the mortar and flattened. *Sip* made from the tender rice tastes sweeter. These flakes are usually consumed as snacks with tea.



Rice Cracker

The Bhutanese version of rice cracker is called *dzaw* which is prepared by roasting rice in frying pan until it becomes crunchy. It is a popular snack in Bhutan. The process of roasting rice is as follows: the rice is soaked over night in a bowl of warm water that makes it soft. It is then emptied into a basket to drain out the water. The soft rice is mixed with small quantity of oil. Then a handful of rice is roasted at a time in a big pan called *lhang-gna*, stirring constantly. When the rice in the pan begins to crack and changes to light brown, it is poured into a basket. Preparation of *dzaw* is a tedious job especially when the quantity is large.



Dzaw is often made special by mixing it in sugar, butter and *zimchi-nam* (*Perilla frutescens*).

Chugo

Chugo (cheese cube) is a hard and dry cheese and is a popular dairy product in Bhutan. This product comes in three shapes – cubes, slice and slab. The cubes are put into garland of twenty pieces each on a yak hair string. This garland is kept hanging on a pole in the tent or kitchen and allowed to dry until they become hard. It can also be sold semi-dry. The sliced shape comes mainly from Haa, so it is often called *Haapi chugo*, and larger in size and square shaped. It is smoke dried which is why it has a brownish tint. *Chugo* can be preserved for a long time. The slab *chugos* are soft and sold by slicing pieces according to the need of the customer.

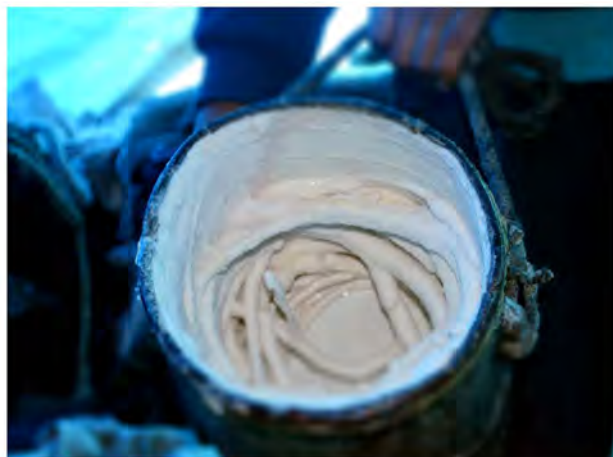




While hard, dried *chugo* and *haapi chugo* are chewed like dried fruit, semi-dried cheese are fried in butter and sweetened by adding sugar.

Philu

It is a milk product, considered to be a specialty of the highlanders in Western Bhutan. Wreaths of fir branch are placed over the rim of the milking pail before milking the *bji* (a female yak). The sprays resulting from milking the cow are captured by the spikes of fir needles just like frost on the blades of grass. After the milk is emptied into the churn, the pail is turned upside down with the wreath still covering the brim to let the remnants of milk in the pail drip onto the needles. This procedure is repeated over couple of weeks until long gummy strands are formed on the wreath. This sticky substance is then removed from the wreaths and boiled in a container. The boiled content is put into a piece of white cloth and hung from the ceiling until the water completely drains out. It is then placed between two flat stones, and dried in the sun. It is then fried or cooked with chilli to make a rich dish with a smooth gummy substance that has the taste of matured cheese.



Shel Roti

Shel roti is a specialty of the Southern Bhutanese. It is a kind of fried bread looped. It can be eaten as snack or as meal. It is made from rice flour mixed with various ingredients like banana, cardamom, milk, eggs (optional), and other spices depending on preference. It is usually made during the festival of *Dasai*.



Gunduruk

Gunduruk is another specialty of the southern community. It is made from mustard leaves and stems of turnips and radishes. The process begins with the washing and drying of fresh leaves of mustard, turnip and radishes in the sun until they wilt and soften. These wilted leaves and stems are then put into a 100-120cm deep pit in the ground and crushed with pestle. The pit with the contents is covered with straw, banana leaves or other broad leaves. The covers are pressed down with heavy objects like boulders, and logs. After two to three weeks of fermentation the leaves and stems are dried in the sun to become gunduruk. It is stored in a container for up to three years.



Butter Tea

Tea is an important item for social custom in Bhutan. It is used to welcome and see off guests. Butter tea is popular among the Bhutanese irrespective of age and status. Tea leaves, prepared as described earlier, are brewed in a pot until the water becomes dark brown and then more hot water is added until it turns brown. The liquid is poured into a cylindrical container called *jasum*, and then salt and butter along with a pinch or two of bicarbonate soda are added and then churned with the help of a piston. Although butter and soda are used as a catalyst to draw out the taste and colour, it is actually the vigour with which the liquid is churned.

Today, the use of traditional ja-sum is replaced by electric blenders except in rural areas. For few people tea is made using a wooden twirling stick turned vigorously between two palms.

The tea is poured into kettles or pots and served hot. Tea is first offered at the altar for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the deities, to the malevolent spirits and hungry ghosts and served frequently during ritual sessions.

Rice Cake

Locally called *men gye* this cake is made from teamed rice mashed and evenly pasted flat on a tray like container. Salted butter is thinly spread over the surface and eaten either with tea or *ezay*. This is popular in the district of Wangduephodrang.

Hollow Crispy Bread

Meykhu is a round crispy muffin fried in oil. It is made from rice flour mixed with a bit of salt. People keep the rice soaked in water and grounded into fine flour. It is again sieved to make sure no coarse materials are left in the flour. The flour is then finely kneaded into dough and then dipped into boiling oil until it swells into crispy muffin.



Yam

In ancient times cereals were rarely available for cultivation. So, people especially of the Eastern Bhutan used to collect yams (tubers) like *borang jektang* (*Dioscorea hamiltonii*), *pantang* (*Dioscorea pentaphylla*), and *bozong* (*Calocasia sp.*) from the forest. Yam is boiled and eaten like potatoes with *ezay*. Sometimes, yam can be dried, mashed into flour to make pancake, cooked like a soup or baked in hot embers. People also put yeast in yam to make drinks.



Changkoe

Changkoe is usually made from cooked rice mixed with yeast and allowed to ferment in airtight containers. One can easily make out if the changkoe is ready to use when a sweetened smell emits from the container.



Changkoe is easy to prepare. Heat butter in a pan and fry eggs (optional). Then the required amount of fermented mass is put into the melted butter and fried eggs. For those who wish to take as a soup, they add water and heat until it is hot but not until boiling point.

It is made especially for the mother after child delivery. It is believed that this broth will help to relax her and facilitate milk production and flow. It is also served to all relatives, friends, and well-wishers who visit her to see the new baby.

Bangchang

It is the most common local brew made from wheat/maize. It is usually served in a special pot called thro (khro). A bamboo strainer is immersed into the untensil filled with the mass and warm water. A round ladle is used to scoop out the liquid from the strainer and served.



When there less water, hot water is added to the mass and stirred with some force so that the core of the grains is smashed. The liquid is strained and served until the taste has deteriorated. It is also served cold in hot places as *sinchang*.

The process begins as the maize is grounded, then boiled. Once it is cooked, it is left to cool in a tightly woven bamboo mat. Then yeast is scattered over and stirred to mix up properly. It is then stored in a basket and wrapped with warm cloths to increase the temperature for a couple of days. When the liquid starts to ooze out of the container, it is sealed in polythene can or earthen pot and sealed until full maturation. It takes about three days during the summer and few months during the winter time to mature. People often drink *bangchang* on any occasion, but beer and factory made alcohol has pushed this drink out of fashion. If it is wheat, the grain is directly boiled for fermentation with the same process.

Ara

Ara (distilled alcohol) is a traditional beverage and a common drink in the country. *Bangchang* is boiled in a long cylindrical container called *ara-zang* placing an empty pot above the boiling mass supported by a wooden tripod. Another pot is place on top of the cylindrical container and sealed tight so that warm steam does not escape. The pot over the container is filled with cold water. This is to allow the steam inside to condense and drop into the pot which is the distilled alcohol. As the water warms up it is replaced with cold water again and again for a few times. Afterwards the pot on top is removed and the distilled liquid is taken out. The result is *ara*. In olden days people in the eastern Bhutan used *bokpi* from *fadi bodi*, *khalaktang*, *phantang* and *bozong* (all kind of yam grown wildy in the forest) instead of grains.

Ara is used for any occasion like it is offered as *dongchang* to guest, as *tsbogchang*, all of which are already explained in the Chapter 3.

Yeast

Yeast is called *phab* in Dzongkha and *pham* in Tshangla dialect. There are three wild plants locally known as *yangrim* that is used for making yeast. They are called *chong yang rim*, *ru yang rim*, and *bainang yang rim* in Tshangla dialect. While *chong yanrim* and *bainang yangrim* are plants, *ru yangrim* is a climber which is also known as *pham ru*. For making yeast, people use the leaves of *chong yangrim* and *bainang yangrim* while they use the bark of *ru yangrim*.

The leaves or bark is cut into small pieces and dried. It is then pounded into fine particles, sieved and then mixed with maize flour and rice husk which is finally prepared as *drengo* (described above in this section). When the dough is cooled, it is moulded into muffin like shape called *bae* (yeast ball). The old yeast is called *abi* which is crushed into powder and coated on the *bae*. The *bae* are then spread on a sheet and covered with cloth in a house and kept for 2 to 3 days depending on the temperature. The maturity of yeast will be indicated by the growth of white fungus on the *bae*. The cover is then removed and the *bae* is left to dry in the sun. When the yeast *bae* is thoroughly dried, it is then used for fermentation.







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CHAPTER FIVE

Jigme Choden & Sonam Yangden

TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

5.1. RELIGIOUS ARTS AND CRAFTS

5.1.1. Painting

- Mural Painting
- Statue Painting
- Scroll Painting
- Wood Painting

5.1.2. Clay Sculpture

- Religious Statues and Ritual Objects
- Types of Clay used in Sculpting
- Process of Clay Sculpting

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- Woodcarving
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- Wangchuk Chenpo (Phalluses)



TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

Bhutan has a rich tradition in *Zorig* (*bzo rigs* - various arts and crafts) that have become an essential part of our cultural heritage over the years. Arts and crafts in Bhutanese context are connected to the Buddhist teachings, as it is said that study and practice of arts and crafts for the benefit of all sentient beings is characteristic of the paths of the Bodhisattvas. Those who have the knowledge and skills in arts and crafts, must, therefore, help and sustain others with full dedication. The designs, motifs, colours and symbols also adhere to these principles.

Sources indicate that the Bhutanese knowledge and skills in arts and crafts have been attributed to the great masters who lived in India and Tibet. Some forms of arts and crafts can be traced back to the 13th Century. For example Khandro Sonam Paldrön, the consort of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo, was an expert weaver, while the Great Treasure Revealer, Pema Lingpa, was skilled in certain crafts. In the 17th Century, the arts and crafts were promoted through establishment of formal training centres and practiced even today.

Today, attempts are made to preserve these arts and crafts for all generations to come, through the establishment of several vocational institutes in the country. These institutes have become a medium in transmitting the knowledge and skills of traditional arts and craft.

There are thirteen types of arts and crafts which can be divided into two categories according to their functions: seven religious and six secular functions. However, there are other crafts that are not included within the two classifications.

The seven religious arts and crafts are:

1. *Lhazo* (Painting)
2. *Jimzo* (Sculpture)
3. *Parzo* (Carving)
4. *Yigzo* (Calligraphy)
5. *Lugzo* (Bronze casting)
6. *Daezo* (Paper making)
7. *Tshemzo* (Embroidery & Applique)

The six secular crafts are:

8. *Thagzo* (Weaving)
9. *Shingzo* (Wood Work/carpentry)
10. *Dozo* (Stone work)
11. *Tsharzo* (Bamboo and cane weaving)
12. *Troezo* (Gold/Silversmithing)
13. *Garzo* (Blacksmithing)

This classification was probably codified in the late 17th century during the reign of the 4th Desi, Tenzin Rabgye (1680–1694) who incorporated all arts which were necessary to the dual system of governance established by the Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594–1651).

Besides the thirteen arts and crafts that were formally recognized, there are also other forms of arts and crafts that have been practiced. They are bone works, leather works, traditional boot-making, pottery, woodturning and calligraphy, which are very essential in a society. These arts and crafts are perhaps clubbed under those thirteen categories, but since they have occupied a significant role in our lives, the crafts have been treated separately in this Chapter.

Therefore, this Chapter presents the materials in three sections. The first section presents the religious functions of the crafts. The second section describes the secular functions of the crafts while the third section dwells on the miscellaneous functions of the crafts.

5.1. RELIGIOUS ARTS AND CRAFTS

5.1.1. Painting

Bhutanese paintings are quintessential of the arts and crafts tradition known as *Lhazo*. Bhutanese paintings are religious in their orientation and are not created in isolation. The traditional painters are called *Lhadrips* (one who makes drawings of lha - higher beings). A lhadrip paints and decorates a new house with traditional symbols, paint a *chosham* (an altar) or a *Thangka* or *Thongdroel* with the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and deities with strict adherence to the already accepted norms. Another striking feature of Bhutanese paintings is anonymity. Bhutanese lhadrips would never sign on their works. It is, however, the names of the patrons who are mentioned on the paintings, if mentioned at all. By the same token, it is believed that the traditional painters gain lots of merits by the act of painting these religious arts. These paintings are aimed at providing spiritual lessons to the viewers and therefore assume meditative functions.

The painters use naturally pigmented soils that are obtained from different parts of the country. The yellow colours are found in the districts of Gasa and Bumthang while the red colour is found in Wamrong under Trashigang District, black soil comes from Phuentsholing and Trashigang and white soil from Paro.

Lhadrip apprentices learn to paint a wide range of images including simple motifs like the eight lucky signs and gradually move on to more complex subjects such as thangkas – large painting scrolls. Thangkas are complex because they depict various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the deities and saints with their follower and appropriate backgrounds. They are often painted on canvas and then stitched in silk frames.

Traditional paintings are classified into four categories:

5.1.1.1. Mural Painting

The mural painting is called *debri*. The inside walls of the temples are usually filled with mural paintings of different kinds. The surfaces of the inside walls are first smoothened and plastered with fine clay and then left to dry. Sometimes they use another technique by carefully laying a fine sheet of cotton cloth over the plastered walls which is not easily visible. The mural paintings vary from the images of Lord Buddha and Guru Rinpoche and their activities, bhavacakra (*sidpakhorlo*) or wheel of existence, varied icons of deities (*lhatshog*), adepts and saints. We also find the paintings of Mandala. These



frescoes are, therefore, strictly religious and strikingly beautiful.

5.1.1.2. Statue Painting

Statues are either moulded from clay or cast out of bronze and metal. Once they are completed, then the lhadrips paint them using appropriate colour. The clay statues are painted all over while the metal statues are painted only on the face, often with gold.

5.1.1.3. Scroll Painting

Scroll (*thangka*) paintings are different from mural paintings as they are painted on canvas for hanging on the walls. Scroll paintings can be kept folded in a safe place and unfolded and displayed on auspicious occasions. In order to make a thangka, the painter fixes a damp piece of canvas onto a wooden frame. Then a mixture of lime and gum is scrubbed on the surface. The surface is then polished and smoothed. The artist then draws a grid to guide him. When the colour is applied these lines disappear.

A thangka is stitched with silk and brocade border of appropriate colours and has two frames fixed to the upper and lower borders to suspend and stretch. Thongdroel is a much larger version of a thangka. It is believed that merely seeing the painting can liberate



sentient beings from samsara. Thus, it brings merit not only to the believers but for the painters as well.

5.1.1.4. Wood Painting

Shing tshon (Shing means wood and tshon means colour painting) is done on the wooden structure. The outside walls of the temples, monasteries and farm houses are normally whitewashed while the wooden structures are painted with varied patterns and symbols often in accordance with different names accorded to different parts. These are bow, phana, pem, choetsi, norbu and bagam. Although the choice of colours may vary from one painter to another, often depending on the choice of the owner or main architect, the style of paintings are generally uniform. Paintings on the walls depict the traditional patterns like flowers, traditional symbols, eight lucky signs or *Tashi Tagye* (eight lucky signs), and the four lungta signs of *Tag Seng Chung Druk* (Tiger, Snow Lion, Garuda and Dragon).

The painting of the Four Friends is popular on the walls. Some walls are also painted with phalluses. In order to paint on the wooden walls, the method called 'pounce and spray' is used. A painter uses an outline of a pattern or the design on a piece of paper to be painted on the walls. The outlines have pricked holes through which a powdered colour contained in a cloth is pressed to produce dotted pattern of the original patterns on the paper. The painter then traces these outlines to paint.

5.1.2. Clay Sculpture

Jimzo is a traditional art of sculpture making of the images and objects of worship and veneration using clay as a principal material. The art of sculpting in Bhutan probably dates back to 7th century when first Buddhist temples like Kyerchu and Jampa Lhakhang were built to keep the statue of Jowo Buddha Maitreya. The art was widely promoted during the time of *Terton* (treasure revealer) Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). In

Bhutan, *jimzo* was codified and included as one of the thirteen traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan by the 4th Desi Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye in the late 17th century. Since then the art of sculpting has been maintained and passed from teacher to students over many generations until today.

Bhutanese *jim zop* (sculptors) are known for the quality and intricacy of creating delicate clay sculptures. They practise sculpting as a pious act since it is based on the iconographic principles of Buddhist art. It is very important to adhere to the rules that prescribe the precise measurement of the body structure in relation to the limbs, postures, eyes, ears, fingers and nose and the body tints, garments and ornaments.

5.1.2.1. Religious Statues and Ritual Objects

Sculptors make clay statues, ritual objects and *tsha tsha* (miniature clay stupa) and clay masks worn during festivals. Numbers of exceedingly fine and intricate religious sculptures and ritual objects made of clay can be seen in every temple, monastery, and the dzongs of Bhutan. These clay sculptures vary in sizes, varying from tiny statues to over twenty feet. There are clay sculptures of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, various deities, gods, goddesses and prominent religious figures which depict the foundation of faith, worship and reverence for the Buddhists.





5.1.2.2. Types of Clay used in Sculpting

Clay is the basic material for making sculptures. A special kind of clay can be found deposited in small quantities between mud and gravels usually in marshy areas. Sculptors use the best quality clay as the images and objects they make must stand against the change of weather for generations.

Clay is processed into three different forms; *tsa dam*, *kong dam*, and *jin dam*. Each one is used for a specific purpose.

Tsa dam is made by mixing clay powder with *daesho* (paper made from daphne plants) in the ratio of 7:3. If paper is not available, pulps made from the raw bark of daphne plant are used as substitute. This mixture prevents the mud from disintegrating when dried. *Tsa dam* is used for moulding the basic structure of the statue.

Kong dam is prepared in the same way as *tsa dam*, but by adding more water to make the clay relatively thinner and softer. *Kong dam* is applied over the basic structure moulded from *tsa dam* to give proper shape to the statue. Generally the proprietor adds any or all of the seven precious substances (gold, silver, and turquoise, and coral, pearl, bronze and any other precious stones) to *tsa dam* and *kong dam* in order to increase the aura of the statue.

Jin dam is applied as the final and finishing touch to the statue. To prepare *jin dam*; the clay powder is mixed with water and then stirred thoroughly until it turns into a thin paste. It is then filtered with the help of a thin cloth. The thin filtered paste is collected in a utensil and then placed on fire until the water component is evaporated. What is left in the pot is a very fine powder. This powder is then mixed with daphne papier mache to give it the binding strength which prevents the clay from cracking. This mixture is again mixed with water and stirred and applied to give the final touches to the statue.



5.1.2.3. Process of Clay Sculpting

Clay sculpting process starts with the measurement of the space available where the statue will be kept later, or the size required by the owner/sponsor. Accordingly, the basic structural frame is made by using copper wires for smaller statues, iron or steel rods for bigger statues as support. Steel rods are wrapped with copper wire to add the value of the object. Gold and silver wires are considered the best to make the basic frame.

The frame is added with *tsa dam* while the internal part is left hollow for *zung* to be inserted later. When the *tsa dam* on the structure dries perfectly, *kong dam* is applied over it to give all the external physical features, forms and the attires. The parts such as hands and head are made separately and attached later to the body for smaller statues, though the head of bigger statues are made directly with the statue. The sculptor must ensure that the parts made separately are proportionate to the whole structure. Any part of the statue that is not proportionate to the whole body is considered an impious act of the sculptor and therefore must be avoided at all cost.

Sculpting is a tedious job, requiring the sculptor to apply the wooden chisel again and again to fill any gaps or remove the lumps over and over again. The statues are left for a long time to allow the clay to dry naturally, and to develop minor cracks which are also left unrepaired to allow air to pass for rapid drying. When no more cracks appear, it means the clay has dried up completely. The cracks are then repaired with *tsa dam* by mixing with glue. Once this is done, the sculptures are ready for final layers of finishing using *jin dam*. At this stage the sculpture is finally ready for *zung* (the inner relic).

Learners have to undergo rigorous training for several years under a master sculptor known as *Jimzo lopoen*.

As sculpting for religious purpose is considered a spiritual act, sculptors have to choose the most auspicious day and time to start a project.

Once completed, an expert (usually a monk) will insert a *zung shing* or *sog shing* (a strut inside the statue as its backbone) and *zung* consisting of written mantras and other precious substances. Then the statue is painted using appropriate colours. Upon completion of all these steps, a *drub* or *rabney* ceremony is conducted by an accomplished lama. The painters and sculptors are highly regarded for their profession.

5.1.3. The Art of Carving

Pazo is the art of carving on wood, stone and slate. This art is evident throughout the country displayed magnificently on wooden structures of fortresses, palaces, stupas, temples, traditional houses and even on furniture. The following section describes some forms of carving.

5.1.3.1. Woodcarving

Wood has been one of the most widely used resources in the country. Some of the masks worn by dancers during the festivals, the altars in the shrine room of any house, containers like bowls and cups, sheaths and handles of knives and swords, xylographic blocks are all carved out of wood.



Choesham, Decorative Items and Furniture

Every house has a *choesham* (altar) entirely made of wood. Generally the altars will have carvings like *choetsi* and other designs such as dragons, flowers, eight lucky signs and mythological animals, on the main structure in accordance with the desires of the owner. On the upper part of the structure called *gu-chag* the altar will have the designs called *pema*, *norbu*, *bagam*, *boh* and *ngangpa*.

Cabinets, *chogdroms*, divans, decorative floral items, religious motifs like dragons, *tashi tagye* and various legendary animals are carved out of wood. The three sides of *chogdrom* (traditional portable table) are carved with dragons, flowers or other legendary animals.

Dramnyen, the traditional Bhutanese guitar is carved from wood in an intricate dragon design. The fingerboard is usually decorated with colourful traditional symbols. The hollowed sound box is covered with goatskin, and attached with either silk or nylon strings.

Masks

The Bhutanese make various shapes and sizes of masks from semi-hardwood, usually blue pine to depict the face of gods, animals and mythological figures. These carved wooden masks are used in the sacred and religious dances. Carved wooden masks are also popular as decorations in houses, dzongs, temples and monasteries.



Xylography

Before the invention of wood carving tradition in Bhutan, all religious texts and official documents were primarily written by hand. With the introduction of woodblock carving and printing technique by Tertön Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), religious texts and images have been carved on woodblocks, thereby reproducing numerous copies, by printing on paper and textiles. Each and every temple and monastery in Bhutan hold a copy of the Buddhist cannons (the teachings) and commentaries on the teachings. Many of the texts from the cannon have been carved on wood, and reproduced by printing on paper.

Woodblock carving is usually carried out on dried birch wood. To make a wooden block for carving, the woodblock is adequately oiled to make it soft and smooth for carving. The wooden block surface is then planed smooth on which the written text is glued. Once the paper has dried, it is removed from the block leaving the image of the scripts on the woodblock. The mirror image of the texts that need to be printed is left on the surface while those parts not required are removed with gouges or chisels. The texts are then carved with the help of chisels.

Images and other *patras* are carved only on to one side of the wooden block, whereas religious texts are carved on both sides of the woodblock.

The carved woodblock is then coated with ink, and a sheet of paper is placed over the inked blocks. The paper is then rubbed and pressed with a roller to get the text printed. It is then left to dry either in shed or sun.

Four different kinds of tools are used for xylography such as *zhogthig*, *yatag*, *segchung*. Round letters are carved using the tip of the *mindrug* with its sharp crescent shape tip. The tip of the *yatag* with its more relaxed crescent shape is used to carve the sub-bending *yatag* script. Similar to the typical Bhutanese knife; the tip of *segchung* is slightly slanted and carves the rest of the letters of the scripts. *Zhogthig*, with its wider and large tip is used to carve the lines in the space on the edge of the text that maintain the outer margin.

5.1.3.2. Stone Carving

In Bhutan, carving on stones is not as diverse or common as wood carving but it existed in Bhutan. One comes across huge water driven grinding stone mills, hollowed-out stones used for pounding and husking grains, troughs for feeding animals, images of deities, gods and religious figures carved onto large rocks.



In Bhutan, stones were also carved to make stone pots and utensils, but today these have become rare because of modern alternatives.

5.1.3.3. Slate Carving

Slate carving is another form of art that is being practiced in Bhutan. Slate, called as *do nag*, is found in abundance in Bhutan, and the artisan is known as *do nag lopen*.

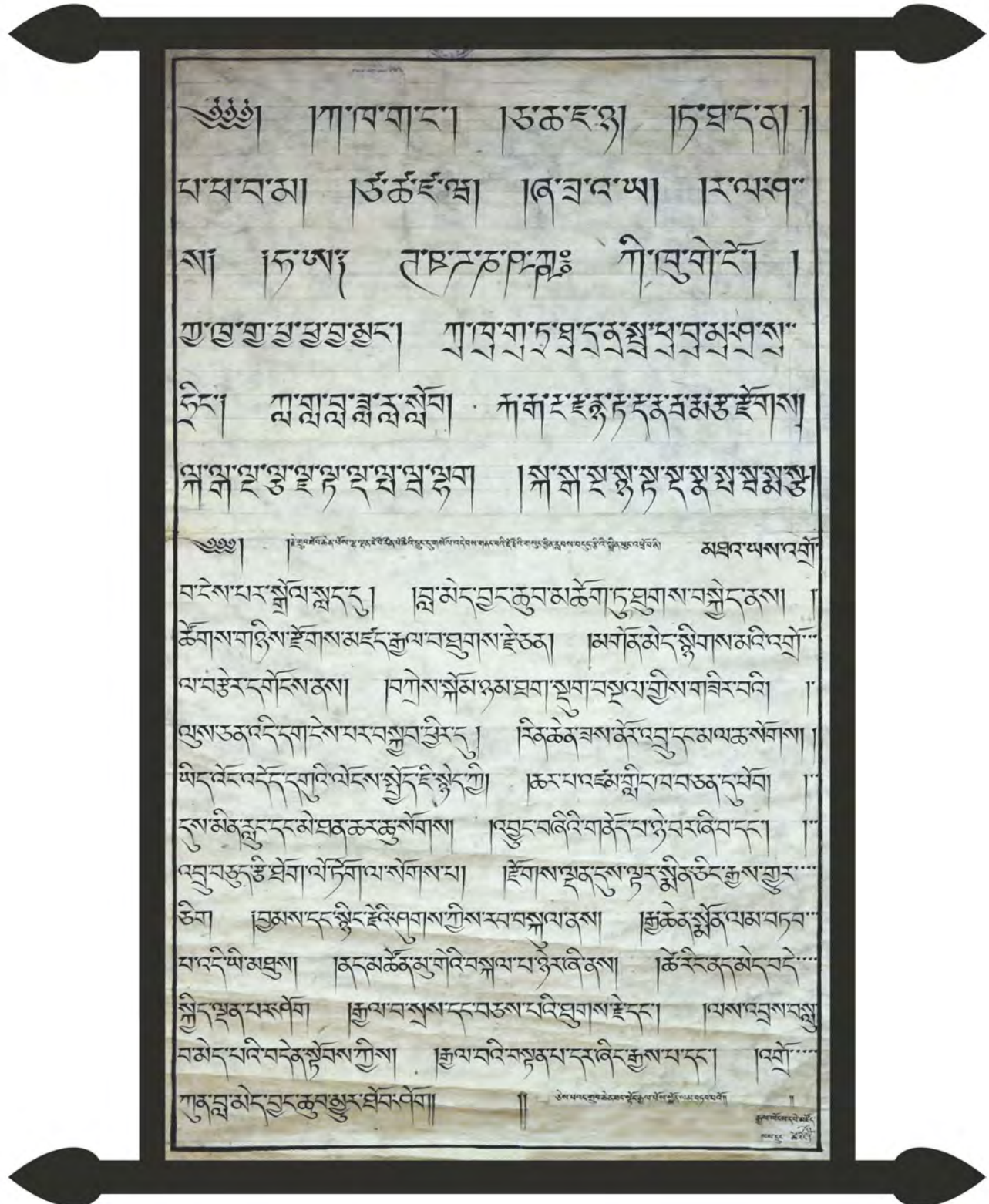
Portraits depicting deities and religious figures, inscriptions of mantras and religious scripts are carved onto slates, and adorned onto the exterior walls of temples, monasteries, dzongs and *choetens*. Apart from carving on wood, stone and slate, the Bhutanese people also carve images of gods and deities on rhino horns and ivory.



5.1.4. Calligraphy

Calligraphy or *yigzo* literally means “beautiful writing.” Hand writing was one of the earliest arts used for communication and documentation in the country. Religious texts and official correspondences were written

by hand who had the abilities to write so beautifully that it came to be regarded as an art called calligraphy. One is regarded as a true calligrapher, if, he or she possesses the six basic qualities such as, the ability to write in perfect shape, uniformity, legibility, speed, correct spellings and the execution of proportions of the scripts.



The introduction of the script into Bhutan is closely related to the spread of Buddhism. Guru Rinpoche visited Bumthang in 8th century, accompanied by Denma Tsemang, one of his twenty-five disciples. At that time, Denma Tsemang found that Bhutanese people had a different way of writing block letters which was flexible and could be written with speed. He is said to have written down the Guru's teachings for the King of Bumthang.¹ Being located to the south of Tibet, this form of writing came to be known as *lhoyig* at that time. Legends claim that Denma Tsemang could write innumerable texts in a moment. Many of the *terma* (concealed religious texts) recorded in the Bhutanese scripts are also said to be written by Denma Tsemang

Uchen (headed) script is mostly used for religious books and official print form. It is an upright, block form of alphabet marked by heavy horizontal lines and tapering vertically towards the bottom. *Uchen*'s fine clarity and elegance lends not only to wood block carving and printing but also to modern computer graphics, enabling the reproduction and preservation of the vast and rich resources of Buddhist teachings. Xylographic blocks were the main forms of prints available in this region for centuries to print religious books before the metal printing press was invented.

student to master the style of Uchen writing before moving on to learning other scripts.

When *uchen* scripts are written at a little faster speed, it gave a different style and came to be called *jogtshum*. Upon mastering *uchen*, the learners then begin with the practice of *Jogtshugm* scripts before proceeding to learn *joyig* writing.

Joyig cursive writing) is the form of cursive writing initially used for taking dictations, correspondences and personalized writings such as poems, verses and other forms of composition. Unlike uchen, joyig has greater flexibility for speed writing by using *dutshig* (abbreviated words). Though joyig has a standard style for writing, different styles can emerge depending upon one's writing skills. People referred to joyig as *jyugyig* or *juyig*. Joyig was also once known as *lhoyig* or *monyig* as this was only used in Bhutan.

Based on the ancient Sanskrit script, decorative and ornamental scripts such as *Lentsa* and *Vartu* are also preserved and developed in Bhutan. Vartu is more or less a headless form of Lentsa (also known as Ranjana script), and is closely related to the *Siddham* script used in Japan. It is believed that Wartu is the scripts of the



nagas, since the letters bend downwards like the tail of a snake, and that Lentsa is the script of the gods, since the letters of Lentsa bend upwards.

These scripts are quite complex and occupies bigger spaces while printing and are not suitable for printing in small sizes. Therefore, these scripts are not used in everyday writing or for any reading texts, except for inscribing mantras and prayers on the walls, temple columns, prayer wheels, stones, slates, doorways, and trees, and also as a decorative script to engrave seals, and to inscribe book titles on the covers of traditional *pecha*. *Khando Dayig* (treasure scripts) is another ornamental script that can be only seen on terma (concealed religious texts), and it is found inscribed naturally on stones.

5.1.4.2. Ink

Gold is considered as the best material to prepare ink, followed by silver and stone. Important and precious religious texts are written with ink made from gold and silver dust. In the early days, when there was no pen or pencil, the writer would carry a *nagkong* (inkpot mostly made of brass or copper) filled with ink along with a *nyugu* (a pen made from a special bamboo called *si*). While inks and pen were made locally, inkpots had to be imported from either Tibet or India.



5.1.4.3. Pen

The best calligrapher would make use of a traditional hand-made pen from bamboo called *si-nyug* or of a bird's quill called *dro-nyug* or metal pen called *chag-nyug*. Their nibs must be flat and smooth with a pair of tongues. Special bamboo from *Toeb Chadana* was most commonly used to make the *si nyug*. There is a belief that a pen is an abode of *Rigsum Gonpo*, meaning that the nip of a pen represents *Manjushri* (Buddha of wisdom), the main trunk represents the power of *Vajrapani*, and the base of the pen represents *Avalokitesvara*, the Buddha of compassion.

Experts fear that with the ever increasing use of computers, the art of calligraphy may be heading for oblivion in the coming years. The preservation of the art today is due mainly to the practice that had continued in our monasteries, which are increasingly making use of computers and computer graphics.

5.1.5. The Art of Papermaking

Daesho or *shogzo* or the art of papermaking originates from an age-old tradition whose history can be traced back to the eighth century during the first advent of Buddhism in Bhutan. It is said that Bumthang used to export daesho papers to the Tibetan King Thrisong Deutsen as a religious offering. Known for its durability, daesho papers were used in writing Buddhist cannons and commentaries at Samye monastery.

Daesho sheets were also bartered with goods from Tibet in the past. In the olden days, daesho was mainly used for writing religious scriptures, legal acts, and letters and for maintaining tax records. *Teryig* or treasure scripts were written on daesho parchment.

In Bhutan, two species of daphne plants are used for making traditional paper; *Edgeworthia gardneri*, called *dae kar* (white daphne) and *Daphne spp.*, known as *dae*



nag (black daphne) in Dzongkha. Sometimes, these papers were known as *dug shog* (poisonous paper). The bark of daphne contains a kind of insect-repellent toxin and is known to last for hundreds of years. In the past, paper was made to meet domestic needs except for supplying some to Tibet, but today daesho is sold in the market and even exported. A person who makes daesho is known as *daezop*.

5.1.5.1. Process of Papermaking

The art of papermaking is confined to the northern, central and eastern part of the country where the high



altitude daphne plants are found in abundance in the dense mountainous regions.

Daphne is a small individual plant with fragrant white flowers that grows mainly in altitudes ranging from 1300 to 3500meters above sea level, while *Edgeworthia gardneri* grows in thick groves at about 500 to 3000 meters. The plants can regenerate and be ready for use again in about three to eight years.

Daeshing is harvested in the summer; the bark is stripped off the plants and then soaked in water so that the outer layer and the residue of dirt are washed away. It is then dried in the sun. Once dried, the soft inner tissues are separated from the outer layer of the bark and left to dry again.

This tissue is then cleaned, cut into small pieces and boiled in water for many hours. Wood ash is added to speed the cooking process which also helps to breakdown the fibre into softer pliable pulp. The cooked pulp is soaked in water to remove any hard and foreign body left, before pounding it thoroughly using heavy wooden mallets to make it softer and homogeneous. Natural dyes, roots, pine leaves, and different types of flower petals are added to the pulp while it is being pounded. The beaten pulp is then put in a tub of water and stirred until it spreads uniformly.



There are two ways of making the pulp into sheets of paper

5.1.5.2. Resho

The process of obtaining finished daesho sheets, commonly used in Bhutan, produces a thin and whitish paper locally known as *resho* or 'cotton paper'. To obtain resho, the pulp is poured and spread uniformly onto a cotton cloth screen while floating in water. The sheet of paper is taken off, after the screen and the pulp are dried for half a day in the sun or near a fire. Once dry, the fibre becomes a thin sheet of translucent paper that is peeled off and is ready for use, and the mould is then reused.



5.1.5.3. Tsarsho

The second process of obtaining the finished daesho sheets is only used in Bhutan. This method produces a thick, strong and slightly brown paper locally known as tsarsho 'bamboo paper'. To obtain tsarsho, a bamboo screen is lowered into the tub of pulp, and is lifted out. The fine pulp is then spread evenly over the surface of the screen while it is out of the water. The fine pulp turns into paper sheet on the bamboo screen when it is subsequently turned over. The sheet then falls off, and is placed upon a growing pile of freshly made paper. The



bamboo screen mesh, which is pressed, and left to drain water, leaves a bamboo imprint on the sheet. A heavy stone is placed on the pile for almost a day, to drain out the water. The sheets are then peeled off, and stuck on to mud walls of a hut, one by one. When the sheets are dry, they fall off the mud walls.

5.1.6. Bronze Casting

Lugzo is the art of casting statues, *sertog* (pinnacles on the roofs), and other ornaments to decorate the buildings of temples and monasteries. Bronze casting dates back to the 17th century. It is said that Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal invited Newari artisans from as far as Nepal to cast statues and many other religious items like bells, bowls for water offering, trumpets, cymbals, vase and so on. That is why there is a sense when historians say that Bhutan may have learnt the art of bronze casting from the visiting artisans. Availability of these items at cheaper rate has almost cast away the art, if it was not for the timely establishment of the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs (now Department of Culture) in 1985.

Bhutanese artisans employ two methods to cast bronze. The methods are:

5.1.6.1. Wax Casting Technique

In wax casting technique, the required object is prefabricated with wax which is then covered with good quality clay from inside and outside. It is then dried several times in the sun. The object is then heated in the fire so that the wax melts away leaving a thin space between the hardened clay. Finally, melted copper, silver or gold is poured onto the figure until the cavity is filled up. It is then left to cool. Once cooled, the clay is broken and removed from both sides which produce the required shape of the object. This method is time consuming and needs greater effort as it takes one master copy for every new product.

5.1.6.2. Sand Casting Technique

In this technique, a master copy of an object or a statue to be cast is made either out of clay, wood or any other materials. Clean sand is thoroughly sieved, allowing only fine particles to settle. The fine and powdery sand is thoroughly kneaded with the liquid extracted from sugarcane. The soft dough is applied to the master copy to form a duplicate copy/negative of the object. In case of a statue, different parts of the body are taken out and cast separately. On this shape of the object the melted materials (molten) is poured from outside. This method

is used more frequently in Bhutan as one master copy will work for many products.

The casting process generally includes the following stages:

1. Drawing – This involves drawing the object/master copy to be cast.
2. Casting – Casting involves pouring the molten materials onto the master-copy of the object, which is applied either with sand or wax.
3. Sculpting – Once the molten materials are poured on the master copy, it needs to be sculpted to right shapes.
4. Welding – In sand casting method, especially the statues, different body parts are cast separately. Once they are complete, the parts are joined together by welding.
5. Carving – Casting also involves carving of different shapes and patterns on the objects.
6. Polishing – Once everything is done, the object is then polished.

5.1.6.3. Statues

Different statues of Buddha and Buddhist deities and saints are cast in the manner described above. The statues are gilded with gold.





5.1.6.4. Sertog

Also known as pinnacles, sertog are hoisted on the rooftop of a temple or monastery and *dzongs*. They are gold-plated and are a prominent feature of Buddhist the temples. *Sertog* cannot be installed on residential houses or buildings.

5.1.6.5. Ritual Objects

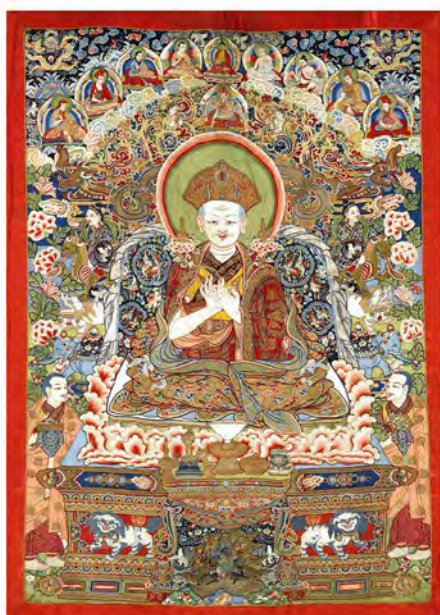
Rituals objects such as bell (*drilbu*), *dorje* (vajra), *karmikom*, (cup for butter lamps), *bumpa* (vase), etc. are also made.



5.1.6.6. Water Offering Bowls

Lugzo also produces water-offering bowls. It comes in a set of seven bowls. In Bhutanese homes, temples and monasteries, a new day begins by making water offering in the morning.

5.1.7. Tshemzo: The art of Tailoring, Embroidery and Appliqué



Tshemzo includes three forms of art - tailoring, embroidery and appliqué under one name. Tailoring involves stitching all kinds of garments while embroidery, which is called *tshemdrub*, and appliqué or *lhemdrub* are done for making *thangka* and *thongdroel*.

5.1.7.1 The Art of Embroidery & Appliqué

According to Lam Nado (Druk Karpo, 1986), the art Embroidery called *tshemdrub* and appliqué was introduced in Bhutan by *Drung* Damcho Gyaltsen, secretary of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. He was not only a scholar but was also highly skilled in the art of *Tshemzo*. Later the art was widely spread by *Penlop* (Chieftain) Drakpa Jamtsho and *Choeje* (Nobility) Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltsen subsequently.

Tshemdrub involves working with thread and needle to produce designs while *lhemdrub* involves fixing the cut patches of either silk or brocade to produce bigger images. Monks normally practice the art of embroidery and appliqué. Monks produce large religious scrolls known as *Thangkas* that portray Buddhist deities and saints. Seven different kinds of embroidery are practiced:



- *Lhutschem*-light coloured embroidery
- *Sitschem*- the bold coloured embroidery
- *Nyitschem*- double-embroidery
- *Chagthagtschem*- Iron-chain embroidery
- *Zurtshem*- lining embroidery
- *Dongtschem*- front embroidery
- *Chedtshem*- outline embroidery

5.1.7.2. Sewing Traditional Garments

Common practice among the people is *lagtschem/thrultshem*. These tailors are skilled at sewing the traditional Bhutanese garments. They stitch *gho* and *kira*, the national attires for men and women respectively. They also design and stitch *tego* and *wonju* (blouse) worn by Bhutanese women. Traditionally, *lagtschem*- to stitch costumes with bare hands using the thread and needles- were practiced and were done mostly at home. Today, however, with the advancement in technologies, tailors use modern sewing machines, which are more effective and carried out with much ease.

5.2. CRAFT RELATED TO SECULAR FUNCTIONS

5.2.1. Thagzo: The Art of Weaving

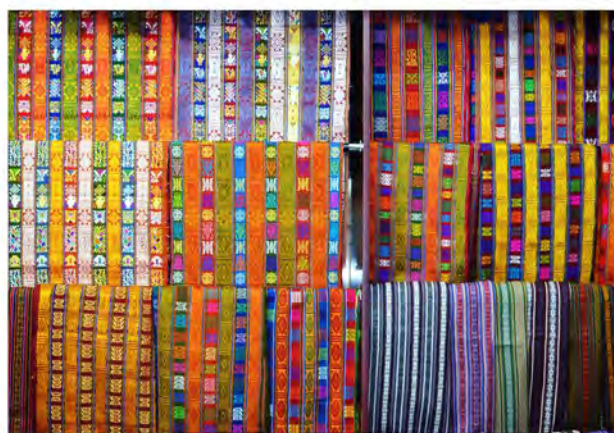
Thagzo or the art of weaving is one of the oldest and widely used skills that have been practised for ages.

The all-encompassing use of textiles represents prestige, artistic skills, discipline, determination, familial sentiments, tangible form of asset, and expressions of devotion towards the dharma. Bhutanese textiles are the product of knowledge and skills developed and nurtured over centuries of experiences and family traditions. Our textiles are valued and renowned for their richness of colour, sophistication and variation of patterns, including the intricate fibre preparation, dyeing, weaving, and embroidery techniques. This rich and complex art of weaving is an inseparable part of our culture and history.

Today, the wide availability of imported fibres and dyes are transforming the palette, textures, and surface qualities of the clothes produced. There are more than eleven types of yarns and dyes including the five main colours (white, yellow, red, green and blue) and six subsidiary colours (orange, dark green, light yellowish green, pink, light white, blue and black). These different colours are woven in accordance with different designs and patterns. Women from central and eastern regions of Bhutan are famous for their weaving skills and each region produces their own specialty.

5.2.1.1. Weaving with Designs and Patterns

Every textile product has a name that expresses its particular combination of colour, design, pattern and fibre. Weaving pattern is either stripes - vertical for men, and horizontal for women in cotton, silk or wool. Required extra designs are made by adding warp threads.



Patterns like the *vajra* (thunderbolt), the swastika, the tree or the wheel, each has symbolic meanings. Although the symbols used in Bhutanese textiles are primarily of geometric nature, they also have deep religious meanings. Some common geometric symbols include the *dorje*, the *drame*, the *phenphenma*, the *phub*, the *yudrung*, and the *shinglo*.

The *drame* or the eternal knot is a classic Buddhist symbol. The *phenphenma* is a symbol of butterfly and the eight-pointed star, while the *dorje* or the thunderbolt represents the indestructible powers of Buddhism. The *phub* or the rainbow is a triangle pattern in successive rainbow colours. When *dorje* symbol is incorporated within the *phub* symbol, the pattern becomes *dorje-phub*. The *shinglo* symbol is used mostly on the royal and noble family dresses since this symbol is the most difficult to weave. The *shinglo* symbol represents the “tree of life”.

The *therpochay* (Jana chagri) or the China Wall pattern is usually seen next to the *phub* design on *kiras*. The *therpochay* symbol is believed to have been derived from the designs on Chinese brocade. The *yudrung* portrays the crossroads where the four directions meet. A *yudrung* represents the balancing forces of the universe, when rotating. The *yudrung* is an ancient pattern and its epicentre is considered a spiritual place. *Yudrung* is depicted on the royal *thrikheb* as the centre most design.

Bhutanese weavers usually weave two types of textiles; the plain woven meaning *kar chang*, and the pattern woven textile called *metochem*. These are described below.

5.2.1.2. Karchang

The plain woven textiles include *pangtse*, *mathra*, *sethra*, *adang mathra*, *shardang thara*, and *pe sar*. Plain woven clothes are worn at home or work since they are cheaper than the pattern-woven clothes. *Mathra* (red pattern) is a varicoloured plaid woven on a maroon or red field, sometimes woven with stripes (*khaja*) at the edges. *Sethra* (gold pattern) is a plaid weave usually with yellow or orange field as the dominant colour. *Sethra* has two popular colour combinations; red with black or blue plaid on a white field; and yellow, white and black on an orange field. *Sethra dokhana* consists of black colour in it while *buechapgi sethra* does not contain black. *Thara* has horizontal stripes with white as a dominant field. *Shardang thara* has multicoloured stripes while

Samkhongma have narrow red-and-blue stripes, and *Mondre* which has a similar pattern to *Samkhongma* is worn mainly by older people in rural areas. *Kamtham Jadrima* is a striped textile with colours of the rainbow. *Kamtham thara* consists of simple warp stripes or plaids, which are gifted to a religious person. *Pesar* (new design) is a modern innovation with small patterns in striped plain cloth. *Yu tham* or the country cloth which is made of wild silk or cotton is very popular in the rural areas. *Kawley* is a completely black fabric of wool, which is believed to have healing properties.

5.2.1.3. Meto Chem

Aikapur and *Ku shu thara* are the two specific kinds of pattern-woven textiles. Pattern-woven clothes are considered special, and are valued and saved for special occasions like festivals, marriages and for New Year celebrations. Bhutanese weavers weave many different types of clothes with intricate designs such as leaves, birds, trees and other animal patterns. These are briefly explained below.

Aikapur

Aikapur is a textile woven of cotton or silk, and appears to be embroidered. Aikapur has double faced pattern bands called *hor* which alternate with rows of plain weave; with always an odd number of legs '*kangpa*' or cross hatches. A textile is referred to as a *b-sampa* (with three legs); *b-napa* (with five legs); *b-zumpa* (with seven legs); *b-gupa* (with nine legs); *b-songhthurpa* (with eleven legs); and *b-songsampa* (with thirteen legs). Aikapur is differentiated by the colour of the background thread, and the supplementary thread used. The common colours used in aikapur are: *dromchu chema*, literally meaning 'little boxes', with red, green, yellow, and white pattern bands. *Mentse mathra* is a material with a yellow base, and with red and green stripes. *Montha* has a blue or black background with red pattern bands between colourful stripes. *Lungserma* has green and red pattern



bands on a yellow background. *Shinglo* or 'tree of life' patterns made on the fabric are used to assess the quality of an aikapur. The delicate branches and leaves of these trees are inspected when judging the quality of a textile

Kushu Thara

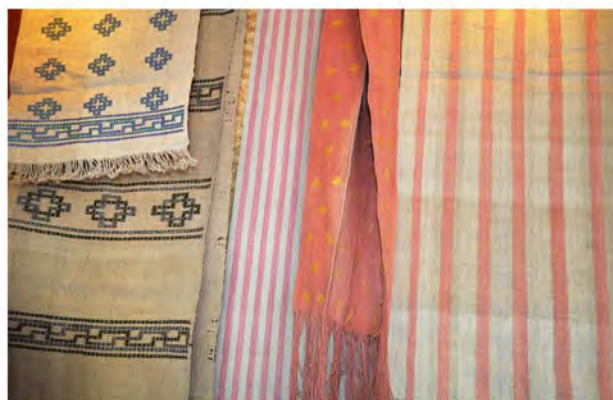
Kushu thara used to be considered aristocratic and the most prestigious dress for women. Ku shu thara is woven from vegetable dyed cotton and raw silk (*bura*) or entirely from silk. Ku shu thara has spectacular brocade design which take up to a year to weave. Ku shu thara is always embellished on a white base, and a similar *kira* with a blue or black background is called *ngosham*. *Sapma*, the continuous weft patterns, and *tingma*, the alternative weft patterns are used as base pattern for *kushuthara*, *ngosham* or *shinglochem*. *Shinglochem* can be either a gho or a kira, woven with alternate rows of warp pattern bands.

5.2.1.4. Weaving Materials

Bhutanese produce fibres such as raw cotton, wool, nettle fibre, yak hair and *bura* (raw silk). The most expensive and the most valued fibre in Bhutan is raw silk. The Bhutanese do not kill the silk worms that remain inside after spinning its cocoon, but are left until they escape, which breaks the thread before it is unrolled. That is why, Bhutanese raw silk feels and looks relatively coarse compared to Indian and Chinese silk.

Several types of yarn like *seshu* (cultivated from mulberry silk moth *Bombayx mori*), *bura* (produced by wild non-mulberry silk moth), *namdru kuep* (parachute silk), and varieties of silk imported from India are notable.





Nettle

Nettle or stinging nettle, though now rarely used, is said to have been the original and chief fibre used by weavers in ancient Bhutan. Nettle fibre is coarse but strong and durable. That is why people in villages used it to weave sacks, bags, kurel, pagi, pakhi, bundi and tabden. Owing to its strength it is also used as bow string.

Nettle is herbaceous flowering plant that grows in temperate and sub-tropical zone. The plant grows up to 2 meters in height with spiny stems and leaves and bears white to yellowish flowers. Nettle bark contains bast fibre which is strong, smooth and light. In Bhutan, nettle fibres are harvested in the months of October and November. After peeling the stems, the fibres are dried, and then cooked with ash for about 6 hours. The fibres are then washed with cold water, and beaten in order to remove the outer cover. After removing the outer cover, the fibres are dried and dyed with natural dyes. The nettle plants are shredded, and twisted into thin fibres using a drop spindle.

Nettle fibres are used to weave *bundi* or carry bag. Bundi is usually woven with brocaded *yudrung* motif at the centre of the middle panel, on a white colour base. The bundi or carry bag consists of three lengths of cloth sewn together to form a square panel. Ropes on the diagonal sides of this piece are tied together to carry possessions and bedding.

Wool

Yarns from yak, sheep and goat wool are spun using *phang* (drop spindle) and moved to a *chaphang* (spinning wheel). The herders of the high valleys of Merak and Sakteng weave shingka (tunic-style dresses), women's jackets and belts. They also make hats, ropes, tents, and bags out of yak hair, and floor mats and blankets from sheep wool. The *Layap* women's dress includes a black woollen jacket, a long woollen skirt, adorned with lot of jewels, which often include teaspoons. Women also



wear conical bamboo hats with a bamboo spike at the top, held by beaded bands.

Shingka, an ancient tunic-style textile that was woven with either a *ngoshingkha* (blue) or a *laushingkha* (red) wool base, was worn by a high lama during religious ceremonies.

Char khab, woven from wool (of yak or sheep) either on a pedal loom or back strap loom is used for protection from snow, cold, and rain. It is water-resistant and an essential item for the herders in cold the region. *Sephu charkhab* (rain cloaks from Sephu) is a colourful textile with bands of green, blue, white and orange.

Bumthang and Trongsa were known for a woollen fabric called *yathra*, which was used as a cover from rain and cold. In the late 1990s, farmers in Trongsa had stopped raising sheep which inevitably put an end to the practise of weaving *yathra*. *Yathra* is used as bed covers, blankets, rain cloaks, cushion covers, sofa set covers, and as jackets for both men and women.



Cotton

Kershing (cotton) is used to separate the cotton seeds, and then fluff out to make it ready for spinning into yarn with the help of a wooden spindle or spinning wheel.

Usually cotton woven with traditional designs on white background, *chagsi pangkheb* was put on laps to wipe hands before and after meals by persons of higher positions. In the early days, Bhutanese women used to put on an apron-like wear called *dongkheb* as a sign of respect while approaching the king or a high official. *Phechung* is a cotton woven carry bag woven but its



usage is now limited to ceremonial receptions along with chagsi pangkheb.

Thrikheb (throne cover) is a rare textile used as the King's throne cover. It is also used for the lamas during religious ceremonies. *Chephur gyaltshen* (banner with frills), *gyaltshen* (pair of cylindrical hangings with valance), *bumgho* (bumpa covers), *kheb and tenkheb* (altar covers), *phen* (pair of triangular topped hangings) and *chephur* (a pair of cylindrical hangings) are some of the other cloth products that are used in altars and monasteries.

Hingthub is a time-consuming but highly cherished textile woven for loved ones or for use by the weaver or their 'lord'. The finer product demonstrates the dedication of the weaver. It is also used by the weaver's family or to stitch outer attire for statues or as wall hangings.

Today most of the yarns for weaving like raw silk, cotton and acrylic are imported while some of the yarn is spun and processed locally. The availability of cheap machine spun yarns from India has overtaken the local cotton cultivation.

5.2.1.5. Types of Loom

There are three types of looms used by weavers in Bhutan. Traditionally pangthag was the most commonly used loom for weaving larger size garments. The smaller version of this loom called kethag is used for weaving narrow items like belts. In the 1970s, another type of loom called thri-thag (khri-thags) was adopted from India. This loom gained popularity in the growing urban centres. This later type is a horizontal loom with pedals.

Each region has a speciality in terms of designs and types. Kurtoe is known for Ku shu thara, while marthra and serthra are mostly produced in Bumthang. Trashigang district is well known for weaving aikapur, while *pangkheb* and *montha* come from Kheng.



5.2.1.6. Dyes

Bhutanese weavers consider the coordination of pleasing colours more important than the designs, patterns and techniques. Strong taboos are associated with the dyeing process and the weavers are very particular about colour shades. They believe that malevolent spirits, certain weather conditions, strangers or pregnant women can ruin the dye. Like the weaving techniques, the recipes for dyeing are closely guarded family secrets and the formula is usually passed down from mother to daughter.

There are a number of dye-yielding plants. Weavers obtain dyes using simple methods from barks, flowers, fruits, leaves, and roots of plants, and minerals. Today, chemical or synthetic dyes called *tsho-sar* are easily available while the natural dye is called *tsho nying*. They are easily recognisable by their hue. Some of the natural dyes obtained from plants are described below.

Indigo

Shades of green, purple, blue and black are obtained from leaves of trees locally called *yangshaba* (*Strobilanthes flaccidifolius*) in Tshangla dialect.

Indigo (*Indigofera spp.*) plants are cultivated in household gardens as a source of blue dye. Alum earths, sour fruits, and dug shing (*Symplocos*) leaves are used as a mordant in dyeing to fix the colouring matter. Indigo plant leaves are fermented for two weeks, and then passed through acidic ash water.

Lac

Jatsho (*Lacifer lacca*) is an organic dye that produces colours ranging from pink to deep red. Lac is boiled in water until it becomes sticky dough. The pulp is mixed with roasted wheat and allowed to ferment for 10 days. The selected yarn is then put into the boiling mixture until the colour gets absorbed. *Churoo* (*Phyllanthusemblica*) is used as a fixating element in dye.

Madder

Dried stems and leaves of madder called *tsoe* (*Rubia cordifolia*) are chopped into small pieces. This material is boiled together with the yarn to produce several colours ranging from pink to deep red. It is good for dyeing raw silk, cotton and wool. Madder can be preserved in dry place for years.

The ripe berries of berberis, locally called *kepatsang* (*Berberis aristata*) are used as a source of red colour, while the barks of nut of the walnut tree can be used to obtain orange colour in woollen yarns.

Pangtse

Leaves from *pangtse shing* (*Symplocos paniculata*) are gathered from the forest, which can be used fresh or dried, to make yellow colour. Pangtse leaves are boiled in water along with woollen yarns. The yarn is then allowed to drip. Sometimes, *yung ga* (*Curcuma longa*) or turmeric is also used to obtain a bright yellow colour.

Lemon, also called *churoo* (*Emblica officinalis*), variety of other berries, herbs, plants, and roots are used along with alum mordant to boost colours in the yarn. However, since dyed yarns from India are available at cheaper price, only a few Bhutanese weavers practise the tradition of natural dyeing processes these days.

5.2.2. Woodwork

For centuries, many great master carpenters of Bhutan have displayed their skills to produce distinctive architectural designs that had come to be our heritage in wood work or *shingzo*. Woodwork continues to be a dominant part of most construction works. For structures that require wood, master carpenters are called upon to employ their knowledge and skills and to engineer the entire works without any blue print.

The achievements of our master carpenters are evident in the dzongs, temples and monasteries, palaces, houses and bridges. The dzongs are widely appreciated by their architectural marvels. Trulpai Zowo Balep is respected and revered as a legendary artisan, for his contribution in the construction of Punakha Dzong in 1637.

A long thread called *thig* containing dissolved red soil; a pendulum (*chongdo*) and a wooden lupon are essential possessions of a carpenter as are other tools.

Bhutanese master carpenters rely on their knowledge and experience, and are expert in the joining wood without using metal nails. Each structural part like



pillars, doors, beams, window frames, and roof girders are fitted separately on the ground. These elements are then joined together using thick wooden pegs. Logs with ledges serve as staircases. Roofs are also made of wooden shingles, weight down in their places by boulders.

Items for daily use

Skills in wood work are also employed in making tools and essential items as listed below:

- Wooden printing blocks, altars and plates for making offerings in the household, drums (nga) and masks of different types;
- Cups, scabbards, handles for knives and swords and boxes of different types;
- Musical instruments like guitar and drums,
- Various decorative items like the dragons, eight lucky signs and other decorative items.
- Sports items lime darts (khuru) and targets (*bha*),
- Wooden phalluses of different sizes.

5.2.3. Stone Work

Like in many other countries, *dozo* (masonry or stonework) is an old craft that is still in practice throughout the country. The skills of Bhutanese masonry can be seen in fortresses, temples, monasteries, stupas and farmhouses.

It required special skills to cut and polish stones into right shapes and sizes and was carried out under the strict supervision of the head carpenter, who also had the role of an architect. Stone masons use an axe like tool called *dota*. Stones of crude shapes and sizes are chiselled into right shapes according to the style of the structure. There are mainly five different types of stone shapes that the masons prepare for construction. They are *jamdo*- used

as the foundation stones, *zurdo* (corner stone) used as the corners walls, *tshigdo* (flat stones) that are used in the middle, *dotru* (pebbles) used in between the two chiseled stones and *dochal* (flat stones) layed in the courtyards of the dzong and temples. A skilled mason would first lay the *zurdo* (corner stone) and position other stones towards its right and left. The masons used a measuring thread called *thig* to correctly align these stones.

People from Rinchengang village in Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag are well known for their great masonry skills. Most villages in the western part of Bhutan use mud, instead of stones for house construction as mud houses are believed to keep the interior warm in winter and cool in summer. It also depended on the type of construction materials available.

5.2.3.1. Dzongs

Bhutan is dotted with these majestically erected fortresses that sit high on top of the hills often overlooking the valleys. The dzongs are located at strategic places. It has massive stone walls with large courtyards and beautiful woodwork on windows and cornices which are the most striking among the diverse architectural expressions of the country. These structures had served the purpose of defending the country against foreign invasions in the past. These magnificent structures are the true representation of our architectural uniqueness and the living testimony of our artistic skills. Dzongs are mostly rectangular and square structures while ta-dzong (watch towers) and Chu-dzong are mostly round cylindrical structures. Today, these dzong are the seat of administration and monastic body.

5.2.3.2. Stupas

Choeten or stupas are literally translated as a vessel of worship or offering the most common feature on the Bhutanese landscape. It is believed that after the cremation of the Lord Buddha, his relics were divided among eight groups of claimants and that each of the claimants later erected a reliquary in which they preserved the relics. Thus, there are eight different types of choeten today (*Choeten Degye*).

At that time, these structures were erected only to preserve the relics of sublime beings and assumed greater meaning and significance much later. Building a *stupa* came to be considered an act of great piety, earning merit for the actual builders as well as for those who supported the act. It is also a beautiful illustration of our masonry skills.

A choeten requires a great deal of stonework, as it is built out of stones. We can also see prayer mantras carved on the stones.

5.2.3.3. Long Prayer Walls

Long mani walls locally known as *mani dang rim* are the monuments from medieval Bhutan found along the main mule tracks displaying the mantra of Avalokiteshvara carved on slabs of slates. These elegant monuments were testimony to the richness of spiritual devotions as well as significant landmarks for travellers. They have survived extreme climatic conditions for many years. It is said that construction of *Mani* walls









in the country had begun around 15th century during the time of *Tertoen* Pema Lingpa. However, most of the Mani walls were said to be constructed during the reign of the 4th Druk Desi Tenzin Rabgye (1638-96).

Mani walls were largely constructed with locally available materials such as stones, a small quantity of timber and mud used as the mortar. Side plinth is raised from the ground and a wall is constructed at the height of about 6 feet and generally carved Mani slabs are placed on it either in single or double line from end to end.

A timber superstructure is raised on the top with a wall height of one foot and is often roofed with flat stone slabs or slate. The middle and two ends are raised higher than the other parts with a particular architectural design. The center portion has a pocket for enshrining three deities of Manjushri (left), Avalokiteshvara (centre) and Vajrapani (right). The special place in the centre is made of timber and the deities are placed on the wall with a space in front for making butter lamp offerings or other offerings.

5.2.3.4. Farm Houses

Bhutanese farmhouses are typically built out of mud and stone. A standard practice was to erect two-storied house although an ideal house had three main floors and an attic. The materials for the houses vary across the country depending on the climatic conditions and the topography of the places. For instance, *Bago* and

Dagjar Zhikom (farmhouses made out of stones and wood) which are lightly decorated in traditional style are found in the southern and eastern parts of Bhutan. In central and western Bhutan, double storey houses with main walls made of stones and rammed earth while the inner partitions are made of bamboo mats are found. Houses in the cold places like Lingzhi and Laya, Merak and Sakteng are mostly built out of stonewall.

5.2.3.5. Chautara

Found only in the southern part of Bhutan, along the footpath and road, these structures are built in the loving memory of dead family members. Depending upon how wealthy a family is, a chautara is a resting place built with stone on three sides. It is also a place where exhausted travelers can take some respite. Two types of trees are planted close to the chautara which



grow up to provide shades to the travellers. *Lhotshampa* (people who dwell in the south) believe that by the act of constructing those chautara which also serve as the resting haven for those tired travellers, the departed soul will gain liberation.

5.2.3.6. Grinding Stones

As explained in Chapter 4 above, rangtha is a pair of round grinding stones that is maneuvered by the hands. This is usually found in places where stream water is not available in the vicinity.

5.2.3.7. Watermill

Chura is a bigger version of the rangtha which is powered by water. While the stone pair works on the same principle, the watermills are much bigger in size and often turn faster depending on the pace of the water flow. It is still being used in some rural villages. For example, in Bumthang it is mostly used for grinding wheat and buckwheat.

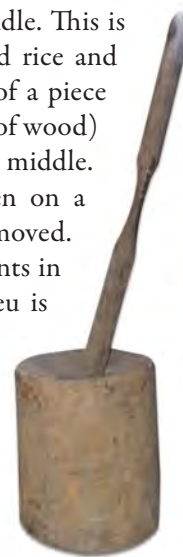
In the 15th century, Hungrel Drung Drung Gyalzom is known to have established several watermills in Paro valley, and thus the following saying was coined:

Please don't raise your knees; Drukpas will establish monasteries.

Don't let your nose run, Hungrel will set up watermills.

5.2.3.8. Large Mortar

A *Lheu* is a large mortar used for pounding husk grains. It is a cylindrical stone or hard wood with a big hole drilled in the middle. This is where rice is dehusked or roasted rice and maize is pounded with the help of a piece of long pounding club (made out of wood) having a narrow hand hold in the middle. Sometimes, a hole is drilled even on a larger boulder which cannot be moved. Today, with the modern equipments in place, the use of devices like *Lheu* is fast disappearing.



5.2.3.9. Mortar and Pestle

Tsiku-doti is made of stone as well as hard wood. The pestle or doti is usually a rounded stone.

5.2.3.10. Bridges

Stonework also finds its use in the construction of the traditional bridges, which were built out of wood and stones. The stone is used as the foundation (*jamdo*) for constructing all sorts of bridges like *chazam* (iron bridges), *bazam* (cantilever bridges) and *tshazam* (cane bridges which are no longer used).







5.2.4. Bamboo Work

Tsharzo, the age-old tradition of working with bamboo and cane is a popular art, spread and practiced throughout Bhutan. The availability of numerous species of bamboo and cane has enabled the Bhutanese to master the skill of weaving these raw materials into a variety of articles for various uses. Throughout Bhutan, the use of bamboo and cane products has always complemented the use of wooden items, forming an integral part of the lifestyle and economy of the people.

Bhutanese farmers weave a variety of functional bamboo and cane articles used for a variety of domestic, agricultural and commercial purposes. Bamboo (*Neomicrocalamus andropogonifolius*), is locally named *ringshu* in Dzongkha and as *yula* in Khengkha. Cane (*Calamus acanthospathus*) is locally known as *munzi* in Sharchopkha, and as *krath* or *gren* in Khengkha. These are the two common species used in the production of a variety of articles. Bamboo and cane strips are used in their natural colour or dyed into yellow, black, red, green, maroon and brown, to weave colourful articles with geometric designs.



5.2.4.1. Bamboo

Ba (*N.andropogonifolius*) or bamboo is a tall perennial grass found in areas ranging from subtropical to warm temperate zones. Cylindrically jointed hard stems, arising from the dense clumps of bamboo reach about 12m in height that taper at the apex. The tough, shiny and smooth cylindrical hollow internodes of the stems render this plant its tensile strength, durability and lightness. Maximum growth and the regeneration of new shoots of bamboo plants take place during the monsoon. Bamboo is harvested throughout the year except during the monsoon season, to prevent damage to the tender shoots.



Musical instruments like *lim* (flute), *kongthag* (mouth harp), *zhu* (traditional bow), *dha* (arrow), *so ray palang* (quiver), *tsar mog* (helmet), *drale* (shield), *beykhur* (containers to store yarn and dried food snacks), *palang* (cylindrical water or liquor container), *si pa* (traditional butter and cheese containers), ropes, *poe palang* (incense containers), *chang sho* (*bangchang* filter), *shoma, rede* (grain-drying container), *bechab* (rice winnowers), *ja tsa* (sieves), *tse zem* (luggage basket), *tsew* (carrying basket), *ze ko* (pot-stand) and *boelo* (conical hats) are crafted, among many others.

Bamboos are also cut, split and dried to weave mats that are used as fences and as roofing, and to build temporary sheds. Bamboo mats are used for drying grains in the sun. People of Merak and Sakten weave a bamboo article known as *tshala* that is used to serve rice. Large bamboo baskets are used for storing household goods, while *bangchung* are used for eating purposes and for transporting food.

5.2.4.2. Cane

Cane (*C.acanthospathus*) or *tshar* is a unique climber plant, used in conjunction with bamboo, to produce bamboo and cane products. Cane is found growing in the warm and moist regions of central and southern





regions of Bhutan. Canes are typically cylindrical, yellow to brown in colour when mature, and uniform in thickness with spiny leaf sheaths and dense spines. Canes are hard, smooth and shiny while the stem cores are soft and spongy. Because of its strength and tensile qualities cane is used for a variety of purposes. Cane shoots are tender and used for making special curry along with the leaves of another vegetable grown wild in the same areas. The curry is called *patsha damru* (*pa tshab dam ru*). People harvest cane on a need basis every two to three years.

Flexible and strong cane strips are used in making ropes, as a cable for suspension bridges, wickerwork, containers, walking sticks, baskets, *bangchung* rims, furniture frames, umbrella handles, mats, and also for tying and stitching purposes in the construction of roof and fences along with bamboo strips.

Patsha dromchu (cane box) is made from cane strips and used for storing jewellery and other valuable personal effects. Cane stems are dried and split to standard lengths, and is often, treated by smoking over fire, or fumigated in sulphur to prevent insect and fungal attacks. To obtain fine creamy colour, cane is often polished with coconut oil.

5.2.4.3. Process of Bangchung Making

Bangchung, one of the most popular articles of tsharzo, is a traditional spherical shaped bamboo plate, which is used to carry cooked food, and as plates and containers to serve food and snacks. Bangchung, consisting of two pieces, the smaller *chishab* (outer lid) fit into the bigger *nangshab* (inner receptacle), airtight enough to carry even liquids. Bamboo and cane are the raw materials used to weave various patterns and sizes of bangchung like *baikor*, *bathra*, *dagama*, *nyi kyelma* and *tangkama*.

Bamboo has to be split into outer and the inner layer. Both of these layers are used in making bamboo

products. The inner layers of the bamboo are used to weave sieves and other products, while bangchung is woven using the outer layers of the bamboo.

Bangchung weaving takes place after the harvest of bamboo. Strips of bamboo can also be stored for use in the future by keeping in water to keep it soft and pliable

To weave bangchung, good quality bamboo culms are split into very fine strips and boiled in turmeric solution for an hour. These yellow strips are then soaked into black, green and red solutions, and dried. *Chishab* or the outer lid of the bangchung is woven using the dried coloured strips, and colourless strips are used to weave *nangshab* or the inner receptacle. The strips are woven into a spherical shape using an arched circular cane strip. Rims of both the inner and outer pieces are tied together with finely split cane strips. A thin piece of leather is appended on the *chishab* to assist in opening.

Takthra bangchung are woven using white and red coloured bamboo strips, imitating the pattern of a tiger, while the natural plain bamboo colour is used to weave *Khoche bangchung*. White, red, yellow, green and dark green are the five colours generally used to weave other bangchung styles.

Apart from being used in Bhutan for various purposes, a wide variety of fine bamboo and cane articles are popular with tourists as decorative items and souvenirs. These products are also a source of cash income for the artisans that facilitates in keeping this age-old tradition of bamboo and cane work vibrant.

5.2.5. Silver Smithing

Troezo or metal carving or gold and silver-smithy had flourished in the country for a long time as evident from the ornaments worn by women and religious artefacts found in the monasteries and temples. This art is still being practised and transmitted.







It is a highly specialized form of art. A special class of craftsmen called *troeko* makes jewellery from gold and silver and other objects such as swords, boxes, teapots and various ornaments in silver that are often thinly plated with gold. Traditional hand-beaten methods are used in the production of jewellery and other objects. The metal is backed with lac, and the pattern hammered out with blunt chisels after the manner of old alto-relievo work. Traditional symbols like the dragon other beautiful designs are embossed on the object. Silver work can also be found on the pillars of the temples, altar tables, jewellery and other religious objects. Using precious stones and metals such as corals, turquoise, silver and gold, these craftsmen create brooches, necklaces, bangles, earrings, rings, amulets containing religious substance, traditional containers (*chaka* and *trimi*) to carry the much chewed beetle nut, ritual objects and much more.

5.2.5.1. Ornaments

5.2.5.1.1. Women's Brooches: Bhutanese women use *Koma* or the brooches to fasten their dress at the shoulders and a chain (*Jabtha*) that is left suspended on the chest joining the two brooches.

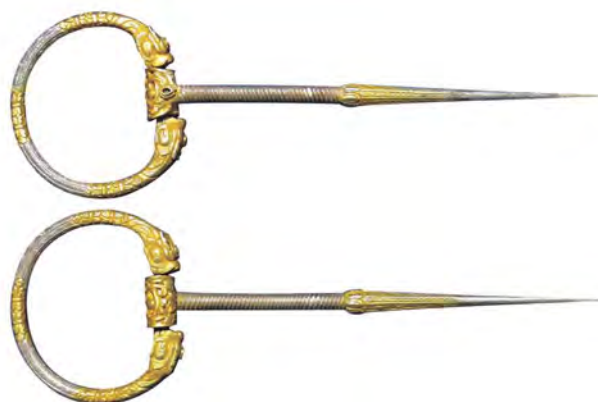


5.2.5.1.2. Chain: The *jabtha* is a chain that holds together a pair of brooches worn on the women's shoulder. It is handcrafted in copper and silver often with a gold finish.



5.2.5.1.3. Fibulas:

Fibulas or *thinkhabs* were mostly made of silver and used in the former times to fasten a woman's dress at the shoulders but it could also be used as a weapon, if the need arose. Today it is no more in use and has been replaced by ornamented silver brooches (*Koma*) which are in various shapes and sizes with different designs.



5.2.5.1.4. Bracelets or Bangles: Bracelets/Bangles called *dopchu* were worn by Bhutanese women in the olden days and today only the lighter versions of the bracelets are worn. It is handcrafted in both gold and silver and are either engraved or embossed with special designs.



5.2.5.1.5. Earring: Earrings or *sinchu* and rings are usually made of silver and gold and studded with turquoise or any precious stones.

5.2.5.2. Domestic Items

5.2.5.2.1. Sword and Sheath: A sword is worn fastened to a leather belt adorned with silver buckles. Previously worn as a symbol of nobility and prestige, today only officials who are knighted as *Dasho* (a Distinguished Officer) by the King are allowed to wear them. Swords were popularly produced in the west, south and east of the country (Punakha, Dungsamkha and Khaling). Further details on swords are presented later in this chapter.

5.2.5.2.2. Kochab (Men's Ceremonial Belt): Traditionally made of thick felt, the belt is ornamented by six fine buckles made of silver plated with gold, is used to fasten the sword worn by senior officials and noblemen. These belts are found in various designs and sizes depending on the users.



5.2.5.2.3. Betal Leaf/nut Container: This rectangular box called *chag kar* is a personal item used by both men and women to keep betel leaves and areca nuts and carried wherever they go. It is handcrafted on silver with gold finish and is often elaborately decorated with the eight auspicious signs, lotus, dragon and other designs.

5.2.5.2.4. Round Betal Leaf/nut Container: Bathra is handmade from silver with gold finish and decorated with the eight auspicious signs, this large round box was used solely by nobility and high level clergy for traditional offerings of betel leaves and areca nuts during special occasions and ceremonies.

5.2.5.2.5. Lime Container: This round container called *trimi* is used for keeping lime and is always carried along with chakar or bathra. It is hand crafted from silver with a gold finish and dragon designs.

5.2.5.3. Religious Objects: Handcrafted silver religious objects called *choe chas* are often engraved or plated with gold in various pattern. *Dung* (horn), *Choe-ting* (water offering bowls), *Dorje* and *Drilbu* (vajra and brass bell), *Bumpa* (vase), etc. are some of the religious objects.

5.2.6. Black Smithing

The art of ironwork is known as *Gar-zo*. Although it is difficult to trace the origin of blacksmithing in Bhutan, recent records tell us that the art can be dated back to the fourteenth century. People engaged in this craft are known as *Gaw*. When Mahasidha Thangtong Gyalpo (1385-1464), came to Bhutan in 14th century, it is said that there were as many as 18 sheds of blacksmiths in Paro. With the help of those blacksmiths, the saint had built 8 iron cast suspension bridges in the eastern and western parts of the country. Few of these bridges are still seen today. As the iron industry evolved over the time,

blacksmithing became a specialized trade. Today, this craft is lagging behind as many of the culinary tools and other equipment are imported from the neighbouring countries.

Iron smelters were small furnaces built from rock that could withstand extreme and repeated heating. These furnaces looked like beehives with an opening at the top and an entrance on the side. The furnace was filled with iron-ore and charcoal and then set to fire. With the rising temperature, the iron flows and forms balls. And these are consequently hammered and shaped into numerous useful tools.

5.2.6.1. Agricultural Tools: The blacksmiths crafted numerous agricultural tools that were essential in an agrarian society and almost every household would have a set of such useful tools. They are tools such as sickles, spades, pickaxes, axes, knives, crowbars, etc. However, today many of the tools are imported from the neighbouring countries, which in turn contribute to the gradual death of the craft.

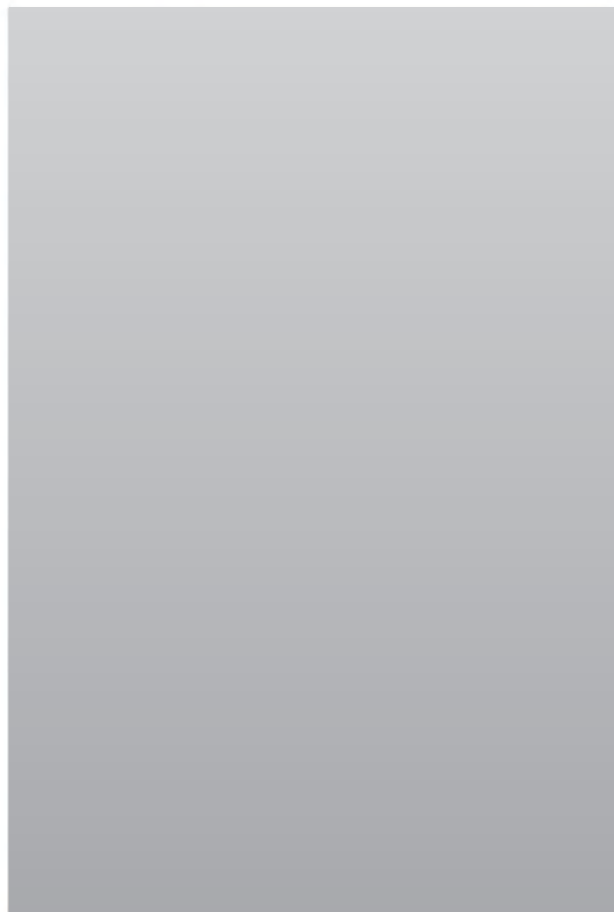
5.2.6.2. Carpentry Tools: The blacksmiths produced many important tools that are required by a carpenter such hammers, axes, saws, *zongchu*. *Zongchu* is a sharp chisel that is used to carve and chisel the edges of wood.

5.2.6.3. Household Items: Bhutanese blacksmiths have also made aluminium items like utensils, ladles, bowls and plates used at homes. They made ladles of different shapes, sizes and designs. Ladles are cast out of aluminium while the plates are made out of both aluminium and copper. One of the most important household tools is a knife. It finds its use in so many ways within the households. Knives come in different shapes and sizes ranging from a kitchen dagger to bigger knives.

5.2.6.4. Armours: In the past the Bhutanese blacksmiths were known to have designed and crafted arms and armours required by men in times of war. Today, colourfully designed shields and iron helmets are retained only in the museums.



5.2.6.5. Swords: As indicated in a previous section of this chapter, there are various kinds of swords, named after its maker and the places from where it was made. Based on the name of the place and the makers, there are the following types of swords:



5.2.6.5.1. Types of Swords

5.2.6.5.1.1. *Paksam Tenzin* – the sword derives its name from the place called Paksamkha while the maker was known as Tenzin. It has smooth surface area and is sparkly. The blunt edge is round. It is considered the best sword in Bhutan and is worn by the King and the nobles.

5.2.6.5.1.2. *Chukhap Tenzin* – it was first made by a person named Tenzin and he was from Chukha. And the sword is of equal size and same shape as Paksam Tenzin. Chukhap Tenzin has less surface area and is not as smooth as Paksam Tenzin.

5.2.6.5.1.3. *Bumthang Tsendri* – Bhutan's treasure discoverer Tertön Pema Lingpa is believed to have cast this sword from the iron found in Bumthang. It is distinct from the rest in that it has the thumb imprint of the saint near the hilt and is considered highly sacred.

5.2.6.5.1.4. *Nagphala* – it was cast during the reign of Desi Jigme Namgyel, the sword appears dark and is very hard. It is also considered one of the best swords and has slightly bigger surface than Paksam Tenzin.

5.2.6.5.1.5. *Dungsam Thum* – the sword derives its name from the source of the iron – place named Dungsamkha. It is hard and shorter compared to other swords. It is as thick as Paksam Tenzin.

5.2.6.5.1.6. *Barshongpa* – Barshong is the name of a place in the eastern district of Trashigang where one can find iron ore. The sword takes its name from there and has slightly thinner edges.

5.2.6.5.1.7. *Thum* – the sword is not as strong as others and can be broken if hit on the hard objects.

5.2.6.5.1.8. *Chhuri Chenm* – the sword is 594 mm long and its blade is about 1mm thick. It is cast out of hard and soft iron. (this name is from the scabbards and not the knife itself)

5.2.6.5.1.9. *Lungdri* – Lungdri is a very thin and light like the wind (*lung*).

5.2.6.5.2. Swords named based on the Scabbards

5.2.6.5.2.1. *Churi Chenm* (wavy pattern) – the sword has scabbard of silver showing the meanders of a river in the middle. It is gold plated. Churi chemn is considered the best scabbard that senior officials wear.

5.2.6.5.2.2. *Benchang* – the sword has all the features of churi chemn except that it has no wavy patterns. Zimpon, Changap and attendants wear it.

5.2.6.5.2.3. *Belpak chemn* – Belpak chemn has lizard skin instead of churi while the remaining portions are covered in silver.

5.2.6.5.2.4. *Hoshu chemn* – the sword has scabbard/sheath, which is divided into three sections. The first and the middle portions are painted red and green. The remaining portion, which covers the tip of the sword, has silver case. The parts between hilt and the opening of the sheath and between the second and the last section have gold designs. Senior officials also wear this kind of sword.

5.2.6.5.2.5. *Zangshug chemn* – the scabbard is covered with bronze and has no decorations. Lower rank officers wear this kind of sword.

5.3. CRAFTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSIFICATION

5.3.1. Wood Turning

Shagzo or the traditional art of woodturning is an ancient art that has been passed down for generations. *Shagzo* is vibrantly practised in Bhutan and the master artisans are known as *Shagzopa*. Bhutan's abundant and wide range of woods like *tashing* (*Juglans regia*), *hashing* (*Taxus baccata*), *baashing* (*Picea spinulosa*), *tsenden shing* (*Cupressus corneyana*), *sermaling shing* (*Acer camphellii*) and *etometo* (*Rhododendron arboretum*) have enabled the Bhutanese *Shagzopa* to create a variety of exquisite functional and decorative products like turned wooden bowls, cups, plates, and containers of various shapes, sizes and colours unique to Bhutan.

Shagzopa are known for producing a variety of highly prized utilitarian wooden articles, turned with expertise from special wood burls and roots of trees. Most of these wooden articles, which come in different shapes, sizes and colours, are actually made to be used in daily life, apart from being good showpieces and souvenirs. Specially turned wooden articles are saved as family heirlooms. The prices of these articles are measured in terms of the quality of wood used, the quality of lacquer finish, uniqueness, size and colour. Traditional turned wooden articles are not only popular with the Bhutanese, but also with foreigners.



5.3.1.1. Dza Phob

Bhutanese legend has it that when *Lha Tshangpa* (Vishnu) and *Norlhai Gyelpo Namthoe Sae* descended from the heavens to reward and gift those on earth, the human beings were not fortunate enough to receive this gift. Even precious and valuable trees were unable to receive this gift, but the small invaluable shrubs like *khenpa shing* (*Artemisia spp.*) were endowed with the gift of *dza*.

Although the stems of *Artemisia* cannot be used in woodwork, the real and best *dza* is found shaped like a pot, protruding (goitre shaped) from its trunks and on maple trees locally called *challam shing* (*Acer species*). These abnormal outgrowths or special wooden knots, found on the trunks of these plants are known as *dza* or *bou*. A plant bearing this protruding *dza* is known as *dzashing*.

Dza can be classified according to the quality of the stripes, and the spaces between the stripes or lines known as *goh* (doors). *Phodza* (male) has bigger and thicker stripes while *Modza* (female) has finer stripes. *Modza* is preferred over *Phodza*. *Wugdza* has stripes and lines similar to that of a *wugpa* (owl), while *dzadram* has inferior stripes. The best and the most valuable *dza*, known as *dza ling choem*, are believed to emit rays of light during the night, and special light rays (*tak tshen gi yoed*) during the daylight.

Various sizes of *dza phob* and wooden plates are made, according to the quality of stripes of the *dza*. *Dza phob* is reputed to have the power to purify poison in curry and drinks by making the poison boil and flow out. During *yang kuk* (religious ceremony to accumulate wealth and money), *dza phob* without silver embellishment are used to gather more wealth and money symbolically. During special occasions and religious ceremonies, *dza phob* with silver embellishments are used to serve drinks.

Traditional cups like *boephor*, *ga phor* and *japhob* are also made from wood. Wrapped in a cloth, *boephor* is carried by most people to save their host from having to provide cups when serving liquid refreshments. *Ga phor* is another type of cup but with a lid, used for serving tea and soup. *La phor* is another type of wooden cup with a lid that is traditionally used by monks and lamas for serving tea, curry and soup. After using, these cups are wiped with the cloth or washed with lukewarm water.





5.3.1.2. Traditional Wooden Bowls

Apart from being a beautiful and practical souvenir, *dapa* or the traditional wooden bowls are used for serving food. The two halves of the bowl fit tightly together to serve as cookie or salad bowls. This round wooden bowl with a lid such as *Bou dapa* and *Dum chem dapa* are traditionally used to serve rice. *Bou dapa* is used by the monastic communities and dignitaries. *Tsam deg*, a serving bowl with a lid, was originally used in the north-eastern part of Bhutan to contain roasted wheat and barley flour. *Tho ke*, a traditional wooden bowl is used to contain fruits during special occasions and religious ceremonies, while *Samden* is used for serving snacks.

Another container for serving wine called *jandom*, has already been described in an earlier section.



The prices of these wooden articles depend on the presence of silver mounting. Cups inlaid with silver are more attractive and durable, and are used only for serving alcohol, soups or tea. Bowls and cups were also made of ivory inlaid with silver, but with more awareness about wild life conservation, this fashion has made a rapid farewell.

5.3.1.3. Process of Wood Turning

In the month of February or March, roughly curved pieces of the wood is soaked in cold water for three months to rid the smell and to strengthen. The crude shaped wood pieces are, then dried over fire and left in the sun for about a month. These pieces are then boiled in water until they are straightened. The pieces are then left to dry completely in shade. The crude pieces of hardwood are then spun on the manual pedal lathe or the electrically operated motor lathe to craft. Electric motors enable a *Shagzopa* to power the tools to craft and produce three times as much as the pedal lathes.

The coarse leaves of *sogsogm* (*Tsuga dumosa*) shrub, which is a good substitute for sandpaper, are used to make the cup smooth. For the final touch, *Shagzopa* use an indigenous substance known as '*sey*' to lacquer black or red. *Sey* is applied only in the sun; and should be protected from the wind, since it dries out in the wind. If applied in the darkness or shade, the *sey* does not stick on the surface. *Sey*, extracted from the *se-shing* (*Rhus succedanea*) is considered as the soul of the turned wood articles. Bhutanese lacquering is applied by the thumb. High-quality articles have at least seven coats of lacquering and a medium-quality finish has four applications. Three coats of lacquering are applied for articles that are not particularly of good quality which soon wane away, and are damaged by insects. There are four types of *sey* viz; *zhosey*, *tsisey*, *tsag sey* and *dzasey*. *Zhosey* is known to be the best varnish. *Tsisey* is obtained from the seeds of *seyshing* while *tsag sey* is obtained from the bark of *se-shing*.

Apart from the articles mentioned above, skilled wood turners also craft a range of contemporary wooden articles like plates, soup bowls, spoons, wine cups, gift pieces, dinner sets, ladles and traditional hand drums that are beaten during religious ceremonies.

5.3.1.4. Drum and Drum Stick

Since Bhutanese tradition is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Buddha, use of drums and drum sticks are a part of the rituals performed everywhere.

Used in all religious ceremonies and rituals, the Bhutanese traditional drum known as *nga*, and the *ngayog* (drumstick) are indispensable articles found in every temple, monastery and home. An ancient instrument of musical offering, the beatings of the *nga* symbolizes the subjugation of evil, indicates the fluctuation of tunes and wordings, and regulates the pace of other instruments during rituals and propitiation ceremonies.

There is a Bhutanese saying, "do not beat the drum empty-handed (i.e. do not beat the drum for fun); and do not propitiate gods empty-mouthed" (i.e. do not propitiate gods without making any recitations). Therefore, drumming in Bhutanese cultural and religious context is sacrosanct.

Choe nga are those drums that are used in rituals and *cham nga* are the small drums that are used by mask dancers. Also used in religious rituals, drums like *choedrum* (large pellet drum) and *trangti* do not have handles and are smaller. Sometime they use hand drums



made of skull called *thoedrum*. Bigger cylindrical drums like *bangna* are used for communication and to dictate ceremonial processions. There is also the *nga chen* (large-sized), *nga chung* (small-sized), *ser nga* (gold), *tshoen nga* (color-decked), and *thoed drum* (skull drum).

5.3.1.5. Process of Drum Making

Traditional Bhutanese drum making involves a number of artisans skilled in woodturning, woodcarving, leather and painting. Drum making involves the curving of the wood into a cylindrical shape, carving of the wooden rims, fixing the handles, painting and attaching skins.

Wood from *sengmaling shing* (*Acer camphellii*) or *rawa shing* (*Toona ciliata* or *Cedrela toona*) is cut into cylindrical shape. Wood from *sengmaling shing* is soaked in water, boiled and then rolled into a round shape in heated sand. A drum made from *sengmaling shing* is known as *pangoo*. Drum makers find it easier to work with *rawa shing* since it can be used without soaking or boiling. Drums made from *rawa shing* wood are known as *brungoo*, which has a slight bulge on its surface. Rims are carved on the cylindrical wood and painted with various prescribed mystic charms like dragon motifs, flowers and traditional symbols. The two sides of the drum are usually covered with goat, sheep or calf skin. The cylindrical wood is then attached to a handle with metallic embellishment. The handle represents a *vajra* bolt or *vajra* dagger (dorje) and fits into a lotus-shaped stand. Shaped somewhat like a question mark, the *nge tob* or the stick used for beating the drum is made from *rawa shing* or cane.

5.3.2. Pottery

Dzazo or the tradition of pot making might have preceded many of the other arts, as earthen pots were most widely used in the country as household utensils

in olden days in absence of metallic utensils as found today. This craft is believed to have propagated on a large scale during the time of Drubchen Thangthong Gyalpo (1385–1464) and Terton Pema Lingpa (1450–1521). It had reached its height of development in the 17th century when Bhutanese people had the privilege of learning various arts and crafts including pot making during the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and the fourth Desi Tenzin Rabgye.

It is believed that pottery was first practiced in Rinpung in Paro, Wangbama in Thimphu, Shar Goenkha in Wangdiphodrang, and Gangzur in Lhuentse district. Pot making is traditionally practised mostly by women, and the skills and knowledge are passed from mother to daughter. Although pot making is not as popular as other crafts in Bhutan, it is still vibrant in some pockets of the country like Gangzur. The community has a strong sense of identity and is proud to be practicing this heritage.

5.3.2.1. Process of Making Pots

The basic raw materials in pottery are red and white clay. Red soil and white clay are mixed in the ratio of 3:1. The process requires a huge amount of firewood for burning pots. A single burning requires almost seven men's load of firewood.

There seems to be hardly any change in the method of pottery. Red and white soils are pounded with a huge *thow* (wooden hammer) after drying them in the sun for two to three days. The pounded soil is then sieved using a bamboo sieve with fine holes. The sieved red and white soils are mixed in the ratio of 3:1 in water, and moulded by placing on a stone slab until the mixture turns into a fine pulp. Pots are made in the traditional manner using only hands. Pots are then shaped from the pulp, and water is applied in the shaping process with a *tukpun* (a piece of wet cloth). Pots are then kept in the sun for drying for a day. Next day, the bases of the pots are shaped. These pots are kept in the pottery house for a week for complete drying.

Heating the Pots

The burning of the pots is the most important component in pot making process. Pots are kept around a small fire and are allowed to be heated gently. The pots are then moved into the centre of the fire, and kept until they turn black in colour. When the pots turn dark in colour, the pots are then removed from the fire.

This process of gently heating the pots prevents the pots from cracking. Around 150-180 pots are heated at a time.



After removing the blackened pots from the fire, the place is cleared of any un-burnt wood, leaving only the hot ashes. The pots are then, piled one upon another, upside down in the hot ash. Once this is done the pots are covered with logs of firewood. In addition to the firewood, pine leaves are also used. The logs are then set on fire.

When the woodpile burns down to ashes, the pots turn dark red in colour, which then give a clear 'tinkling' sound when gently hit with a stick.

Application of Lac

While the dark red pots are still hot, the potter applies *lachhu* (a waste product of the lac dye, obtained from the resinous secretion of *Lacifera lacca*). This process renders the pots waterproof and prevents cracking especially on the neck area.

5.3.2.2. Type of Pots: Naming and Their Usage

Although the utility of earthen pots are replaced by modern metallic pots, the traditional earthen pots are still used as cooking pots, showpieces and flower vases. Bhutanese potters craft earthen pots of various sizes and shapes like *khadza* (for pouring the distilled ara), *ki thap* (pot for boiling water), flower pots, cooking pots, *madza* (rice pot), *jadza* (tea pot), and various other earthen utensils.

Badza is used as an inner vessel for distilling local liquor and *tshoe dza* for curry. *Chang pa dzam chu* has a handle and is used for frying and heating local distilled alcohol. Pots with long necks without any handle are used for making tea. Small pot with a short snout on side, and handle on the other side is traditionally designed for preparing food for babies. Unlike other pots, *Sang phor* has a flat and thick base, and is of two types. One has a handle and the other design does not have any handles. *Sang phor* is used for offering and burning incense. It is said that since lac is an animal product it should not be applied to *sang phor*.

5.3.2.3. Tools and Equipments

Pot makers use several locally made metallic and wooden tools. *Enchupak*, made from either *bashing* (*Picea spinulosa*), or *tongphu shing* (*Pinus wallichiana*), is a rectangular piece of plank which is used for supporting and for mounting the clay pulp while shaping the pots.

Khasha sinthag is a piece of cotton cloth used wet for shaping the pots.

Thongthoed is a flat wooden tool used for pounding and beating the hard soil. Sieve is made from bamboo and is used to sieve the soil, to separate the fine particles from stones and other unwanted materials. *Thow* is made from a hard wood and is used for moulding the mixed soil on a flat stone slab.

Dzink is a piece of bamboo bent to function as a tongs. This tool is used to transport the hot burning pots for lachhu application. *Zham* is a circular metallic tool used to remove the excess soil from inside the pot.

Pots are not made during the monsoon season, because the continuous rain disrupts the burning of the pots in the open area fire.

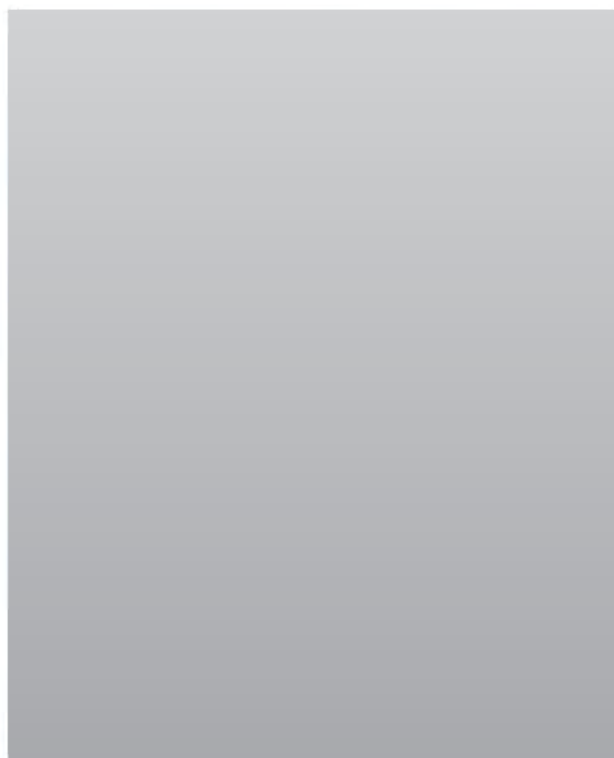
5.3.3. Bone/Horn/Tusk Work

Bone work, is also known as *ruezo* in Bhutan and it is one of the earliest tools used by humans for cutting, digging and hunting purposes. Bone work could therefore be one of the oldest craft which has taken firm roots in our culture. It is believed the craft had come to Bhutan from Mongolia via Tibet in the seventh century during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo. This craft is fast diminishing and needs to be revitalized.

5.3.3.1. From human bones the following objects are made:

5.3.3.1.1. *Kangdu*–Kangdu is a trumpet made from human thigh bones and used as an instrument during rituals performed by the monks and gomchens. It is decorated with silver and gold at the notch.

5.3.3.1.2. *Kapalee/kapala* –the human skull is used to offer *duetsi* – alcohol offering to the guardian deities. Most often the Kapalee is plaited with gold or silver from outside.



5.3.3.1.3. *Trangtring* – also known as damaru. Although wood is widely used for making damaru, a pair of human skull makes a special damaru to be used by highly learned gomchens.

5.3.3.2. From animal bones/tusk/horn of rhinoceros, takin, tiger, sambar deer, buffalo and oxen are used for making various kinds of products as stated below:

5.3.3.2.1. Rosary beads or prayer beads are also made of out of animal bones.

5.3.3.2.2. Elephant tusk are used to make decorative and ornamental items such as rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelet, etc.

5.3.3.2.3. Horns and bones of various animals are used for making items such as cup, *palang* or jandom (alcohol container) and handles of hand instruments.



5.3.3.2.4. Bones have also been used to make musical instruments such *Pchiwang* and dranyen.

5.3.4. Leather Work

Kozo is also an ancient craft practiced in Bhutan. The hides of ox that are older than seven years but not too old are mainly used for hide work. Other hides used are those of goats, deer and snakes. Owing to availability of cheaper leather goods from neighbouring countries, leather work in Bhutan is hardly practiced today and needs to be revived.

First the hide is dried in the sun by stretching it on the ground by wooden pegs on the edges or hanging them on frames. When the hide is fully dried, it is soaked in cold ash water. After draining out the ash water, the hide has to be stretched using wooden pegs in order to shave off the hair and any flesh remains. Once again ashes are applied and turned inside out to remove the skin. Next rancid butter or *shing mar* is applied on the clean-shaven hide which is then thrashed using heavy wooden club and periodically clobbered with legs. When the hide becomes softer and flexible, it is kept away from air to let it dry completely. Then it is cut into different shapes as desired and stitched.

Leather work produces the following items:

5.3.4.1. Utility Products:

5.3.4.1.1. *Gew* - a leather sack used to transport grain/ cereals.



5.3.4.1.2. *Do-de* - a leather rope that attaches plough to the yoke.

5.3.4.1.3. *Shada* - a long rope that is used to carry heavy load in rural villages

5.3.4.1.4. *Zhoenga*- a riding Saddle

5.3.4.1.5. *Ta-dro* - a square-shaped bag put on the horse back and used usually by high rank officials.

5.3.4.1.6. *Tai-thur*- a leather string tied around the face of the horse.

5.3.4.1.7. *Gi-shup*- a leather scabbard

5.3.4.1.8. *Ko-drom*- a leather trunk used for all sorts of domestic uses. Often the larger ones are made from fine cane or bamboo and strengthened with leather but the smaller ones are made with leather only. These trunks come in various shapes.



5.3.4.1.9. *Patathag-leb* – belt tied around the waist to hold the pata which is hung from the side.

5.3.4.1.10. *Ko-dre* – the leather crusher used for crushing the betel leaf and areca nut.



5.3.4.1.11. *Lakey*- cylindrical leather bag used for carrying fodder for horse while on a long journey

5.3.4.2. Religious use:

5.3.4.2.1. *Rem-thab*

5.3.4.2.2. *Dril-che thab*

5.3.4.2.3. *Mani la-khor* – the small prayer wheels which are turned by hand were made with leather in the earlier times.

5.3.4.2.4. *Nga*- drum used during Buddhist ritual ceremonies.



5.3.5. Boot-Making

Although the boot making craft (*Lhamzo*) is quite old in Bhutan, its origin is difficult to trace. The traditional knee length boots are made from leather using threads

made from yak hair. Today, the boots are made of both leather and cloth, which is hand stitched (*lagtshem*) and embroidered with colourful patterns. The traditional boots come in different colour patterns to denote the ranks of officials. It is mostly worn during the official functions. This dying art has now been revived with the government's prerequisite for all the officials having to wear *tsho lham* when attending official functions.

The boots are classified as:

5.3.5.1. *Dra lham*– worn by members of the monk body, but this type is not mentioned commonly these days.

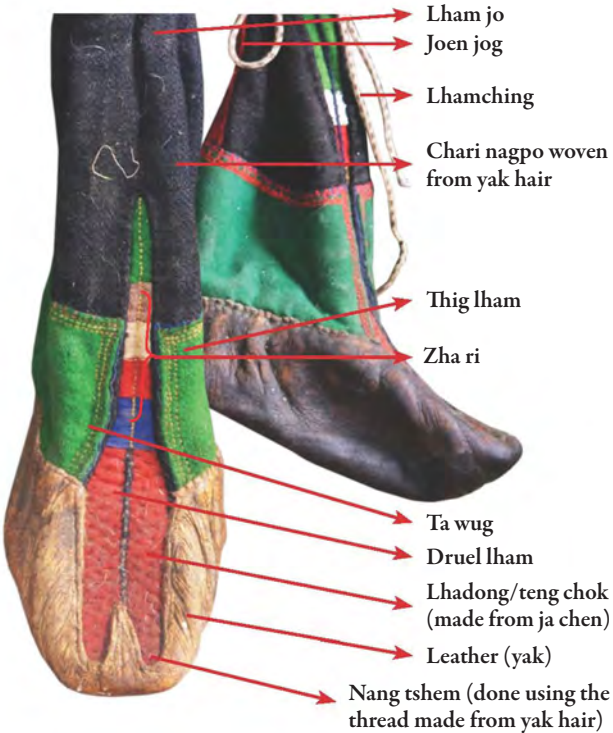
5.3.5.2. *Tshog lham*– this is popularly worn today by everyone including the royal family, members of parliament, and government officials.

5.3.5.3. *Thru lham karchung*– This is used by the officials and has green strip, red colour on the front and white on the either side (left and right).

5.3.5.4. *Dzom lham*– is worn by women and it is similar to *tshog lham*. It has red strips and the frontal portion of the boot is red in colour.

5.3.5.5. *Yue lham* (*gyus lham*) - is worn by ordinary people in the villages and is often sewn using animal hides. This was popularly worn in the ancient times in the absence of those imported shoes.

For details on the different parts of a boot, please refer to Section 3.2 in Chapter Three.



5.3.6. Traditional Symbols

Traditional symbols have occupied a significant space in our culture. They convey essential messages as well as play a decorative role. For instance the symbol of Thuenpa Puenzhi conveys a very strong message to the society on interdependence and harmony. At the same time the painting decorates the walls. Few significant symbols are presented below:

5.3.6.1. The Eight Lucky Signs

In Bhutan, Trashī Tagye or the Eight Lucky Signs are considered auspicious. It is believed that the gods in Tusheeta Heaven had offered these objects to Gautama Buddha after he attained enlightenment. Hence, they are considered as signs of good fortune. They are painted everywhere:

5.3.6.1.1. The Parasol

The Parasol (*dug*) symbolizes the authority of the Buddha. It stands for protection and royalty. The Parasol protects the head from the scorching heat of Sun just as the law protects the mind from the scorching passion. It represents Buddha's head.

5.3.6.1.2. The Vase

The Bumpa or Vase represents a repository of inexhaustible wealth, good health and long life. It possesses the quality of spontaneous manifestation as it remains perpetually full. It is believed that when the vase was presented before the throat of the Buddha, it enables the speech of Dharma to prevail forever in the land and inexhaustible wealth prospers at all times to come.

5.3.6.1.3. The Conch

The Conch or *dungkar*, especially one that winds clockwise, symbolizes the sound of Dharma that awakens all sentient beings from the slumber of ignorance. It is an emblem of power and authority. It persuades them towards the path of noble deeds that are beneficial to others. It is said that Buddha blew the conch shell when he decided to turn the wheel of dharma law. The conch shell is blown in commemoration of this event whenever there is a special sermon headed by a great lama.

5.3.6.1.4. The Golden Fish

A pair of *ser-nya* or the Golden fish represents the Lord Buddha's eyes and stands for wisdom, happiness, wealth and also unity. The pair signifies the ability to swim with ease without obstruction in the ocean of suffering. They also symbolize awakening as it is believed that fish never closes its eyes.

5.3.6.1.5. The White Lotus

The White Lotus or *Pedma* represents the Lord Buddha's tongue and symbolizes the ultimate goal of enlightenment. The Lotus grows out of dirt, but it is clean and pure. It stands for purification of Ku Sung Thug (body, speech and mind) and also symbolizes peace.

5.3.6.1.6. The Knot of Eternity

The Knot of Eternity represents the meditative mind. It is a series of endless knots that has neither the beginning nor the end. It stands for eternity. It stands for the nature of reality and shows the web of karma. *Palbheu* also stands for good luck and fortune.

5.3.6.1.7. The Banner of Victory

The Banner of Victory or *Gyaltshen* is the emblem of the Lord Buddha and depicts how he overcame all the obstacles to attain the enlightenment. It signifies the fortune of having victory of good over the evil forces, which hinder the success of noble goals and also proclaims the victory of piety over evil. It represents the Buddha's body.

5.3.6.1.8. The Dharma Wheel

The *Khorlo* representing the Lord Buddha's hands and legs, the Dharma Wheel symbolizes the propagation of Buddha's teaching. It is the symbol of formulation of universal law in Buddhism. The first sermon setting in motion of the cycle of law is symbolized in a wheel with eight spokes, which stands for the eight-fold path.



5.3.6.2. The Four Harmonious Friends

The paintings of the Four Harmonious Brothers or Friends, popularly known as *Thuenpa Puen Zhi* can be seen almost everywhere in Bhutan. The painting depicts an elephant, a monkey, a rabbit and a bird alongside a tree, which the four friends/brothers are said to have nurtured. The image of the Four Friends is painted on the walls of the temples, houses, hotels, institutions, etc. By having the painting of the Thuenpa Puenzhi on the walls, it is believed to bring about harmony, peace and unity in society or even among the people. It signifies interdependence besides being the symbol of harmony.



It also stands for friendship and cooperation. In Buddhist belief, the painting represents Lord Buddha and his close disciples. The bird is Buddha; the rabbit is Shari Putra, the monkey Muggalyana, and the elephant Ananda. It edifies Bhutanese values of etiquette like respect for elders, cooperation, and generosity. It can be interpreted as the need of unity in the country despite having different races. People paint the Four Friends at homes with a belief that there will be no separation, discord, and partition within the family.

5.3.6.3. The Four Auspicious Animals

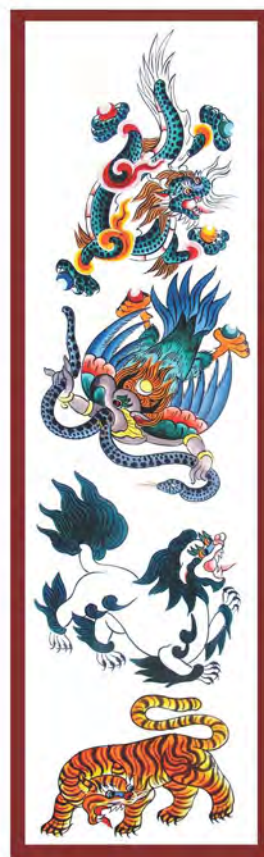
Tag Seng Chung Druk depict four powerful and auspicious animals, namely Tiger, Snow Lion, Garuda and Dragon. These animals symbolize qualities like awareness, vision, confidence, joy and power. They are believed to have the power to avert untoward situations in life.

5.3.6.3.1. The Tiger stands for confidence, dignity, discipline and modesty. The animal is relaxed yet can get

furious when the situation demands. The animal stands for vigour. Guru Rinpoche brought Buddhism to Bhutan hundreds of years ago, riding on the back of a flying tigress. Thus, this powerful animal remains a symbol of great reverence.

5.3.6.3.2. The Snow-lion (Sengge) stands for vitality, dignity and purity. Its body and mind represents the vibrant energy of goodness and a natural sense of delight.

5.3.6.3.3. Garuda stands for fearlessness and power. The mythical bird is believed to be the king of the birds. The painting is believed to avert the illness and many of the evil spells cast by the *Nagas* or the local deities.



5.3.6.3.4. Dragon symbolizes elegance, generosity, calmness and achievements. When the Druk roars in the sky it is believed to open our eyes and awaken to all the delusions of the world. The Druk is indestructible and energetic, and holds in its hands precious gems that stand for wealth, prosperity, and perfection. The Dragon in its entire splendor also represents the country – Druk Yul – the Land of the Thunder Dragon.

5.3.6.4. The Six Symbols of Longevity

Tshering Namdru depicts six characters each of which represents longevity:

5.3.6.4.1. The Brahmin represents the contemplative sage who manifests the qualities of *Amitayus*, the Buddha of Longevity. The sage holds a crystal rosary symbolizing continuity and purity.

5.3.6.4.2. The tree of longevity under which the Brahmin sits is the divine tree endowed with many medicinal qualities.

5.3.6.4.3. The conch-shell-shaped unalterable rock has beneficial geomantic properties and it stands for rock of longevity.

5.3.6.4.4. The water that comes out of the rock is said to be pure nectar of immortality, which is contained in the



vase held by *Amitayus*. It is the water for longevity.

5.3.6.4.5. A pair of cranes found alongside the old saint symbolizes happiness and fidelity. And it is believed that the cranes have longer life spans than the other birds. The cranes symbolize the bird of longevity.

5.3.6.4 .6. It is said that deer are the only creatures capable of locating the plant of immortality. The deer therefore symbolizes the animal of longevity.

Together, these six symbols of longevity embody the natural harmony of the recluse, who, untroubled by the cares of the world, lives a long life of contentment, peace and natural wealth.

5.3.6.5. The National Emblem of Bhutan

The national emblem (*Druk gi gyaltag*) of Bhutan is used in official government publications such as letter pads, legislation and websites. The national emblem is rich in Buddhist iconography whose symbolism has had great meaning to the people of Bhutan for centuries.

Within the circle of the national emblem, two crossed *vajras* are placed over a lotus. They are flanked on either side by a male and female white dragon. A wish-fulfilling jewel is located above them. There are four other jewels inside the circle where the two vajras intersect. They



symbolize the spiritual and secular traditions of the Kingdom based on the four spiritual undertakings of Vajrayana Buddhism. The lotus symbolizes absence of defilements; the wish-fulfilling jewel symbolizes the sovereign power of the people; and the two dragons represent the name of the Kingdom.

5.3.6.6. Images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

In Bhutanese temples, we also see a wide range of religious paintings depicting the images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, various deities and saints. Each of the images has a significant meaning and conveys deep spiritual messages that are useful for our everyday lives.

5.3.6.7. Wangchuk Chenpo (Phalluses)

It is believed that images of phalluses on the walls of houses ward off evil spirits and keeps away all the



negativity that comes from outside. In Bhutan the phallus is an integral part of festive rituals observed by communities, commonly used to ward off evil spirits and counter evil. Therefore, we see them tied with the wooden dagger and hung from the four corners of the houses, nailed above the entrance, painted on the walls and carved on wood.

Numerous terms are used to express its significance

or meaning. For instance, *Kharam shing* or *Mikha*, means a piece of wood to counter the evil tongue or eye and curse. *Gulang* or *Wangchuk Chenpo*, which is a reference to Lord Shiva's potency *Wangchuk Chenpo pho taag*, meaning the male symbol of Lord Shiva, or simply *Zur shing*, meaning a piece of wood that hangs from the eaves. But contrary to the popular perception, the phallus has a world of meaning beyond its obvious symbolism to ward off evil influences.

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GLOSSARY OF BHUTANESE TERMS

Alo (a lo): A traditional Melancholy song of eastern people mostly the Tshangla speakers, usually sung during the departure of their loved ones.

Ara (a rag): Ara is locally brewed distilled wine.

Atsara (a tsa ra): One of the enlightened spiritual masters that has already renounced material wealth and trying to enlighten sentient beings through jokes and humours; clown; Acharya (Skt).

Ausa (a'u sa): A traditional song of Ha district.

Bangchang: A common local warm drink like beer obtained when hot water is poured over fermented grains.

Bardo (bar do): Intermediate state between death and rebirth.

Baza guru (skt. Vajra guru): It is a mantra dedicated to Guru Rinpoche. The mantra is *Om Ah Hung Banza Guru Padma Siddhi Hung*.

Boedra ('bod sgra): Two explanations are given for the origins of *Boedra*. The first one claims that they were popularized by *Boed Garps*, who travelled through villages on official assignments. The songs they sang were called *Boedra* or the Melody of the *Boed Garps*. The second explains that pilgrims and traders who travelled to Tibet composed songs by imitating and adapting Tibetan songs, and therefore the name, *Boedra* which also means, the Melody of Tibet. This second explanation is unlikely as the language, rhythm and tune of Tibetan songs are very different from Bhutanese folk songs.

Cham ('cham): Mask dance.

Chamok (lcags rmog): Warrior helmet.

Changkoe: a slight alcoholic soup made from fermented rice.

Cho-drom (lcog sgrom): Traditional wooden portable table.

Choesham: Dzongkha word for Altar or Shrine

Choesi zungdre (chos srid zung 'brel): System of government based on both religion and politics.

Chorten (mchod rten): Receptacle of offering; Stupa (skt.).

Chugo: Hard dried cheese

Dashe (dar bshad): Auspicious narration while offering scarf.

Daka (skt.): Emanation of enlightened mind; male tantric deity who protects and serves Buddhist doctrine and those who practice Buddhism.

Dakini (skt.): Emanation of enlightened mind; Female tantric deity who protects and serves Buddhist doctrine and those who practice Buddhism.

Dangphu dingphu (dang phu ding phu)/**Nyema nyema** (sngon ma sngon ma)/ **Hema hema** (he ma he ma): Long time ago; Once upon a time.

Desi (sde srid): Temporary ruler; regent.

Dharma (skt.): Body of teachings expounded by the Buddha; one's righteous duty.

Doenchoe (gdon bcos): Propitiation of evil spirits; ransoming.

Dom ('dom): A unit of measurement equal to the length of both arms outstretched in opposite direction.

Dralham (grva lham): Traditional leather and silk boot.

Draktsen (brag btsan): Mountain deity.

Dram-nyen (sgra snyan): Traditional guitar.

Dromchoe (sgrub mchod): A grand ritual service performed to propitiate Gönbö and Lhamo, the principal guardian deities of Bhutan.

Drungtsho: Doctor of Bhutanese indigenous medicine.

Dungkar (dung dkar): Conch shell.

Dungkar gi alo (dung dkar gyi a lung): A conch ring.

Dzong (rdzong): Fortified complex serving as the religious, military and administrative centre for a district.

Gar (gar): The dance performance involving movements of hands and legs; mask dance.

Garpa (sgar pa): Courtier; menial attendants.

Garuda (skt.): A mythical bird.

Gelong (dge slong): Ordained celibate monk.

Goleng: Goleng is a local bull in places of Merak and Sakteng. It is identified as Bos Taurus. The female breed is known as Golengma.

Gomchen (sgom chen): Literally, it means 'great meditator'. Lay religious practitioner often involved in healing rituals.

Gunduruk: a preserve made by fermenting turnip, mustard, radish leaves or other leafy green vegetables.

Guru (skt.): Lama; a spiritual teacher.

Guru Rinpoche (guru rin po che): Guru Rinpoche (the precious one) is the founder of vajrayana Buddhism; Padmasambhava or the Lotus-born.

Guru Tshengye (guru mtshan brgyad): Eight miraculous manifestations of Guru Rinpoche.

Indra (skt.): The Lord of the Desire Realm or the King of Gods; Jain (brgya byin).

Jowo (jo bo): Lord; Buddha Maitreya.

Kharang: coarsely ground maize.

Khashe (kha bshad): Narration or an art of speech.

Khorey (kho re): A traditional song originated in Dungsam, Pemagatshel district and widely sung by Tshangla speakers.

Kortam (bskor gtam): Indirect statement; pun.

Lama (bla ma): Vajrayana Buddhist master.

Lamai zhaldam (bla ma'i zhal gdams): Quintessential instructions of spiritual masters.

Legshe (legs bshad): Elegant sayings; instructions; proverbs; narrations.

Lhakhang (lha khang): Temple; sanctuary.

Lheu (lhi'u): A large mortar.

Loju (lo rgyud): An account; information; story.

Lu (glu): Song; melodious voice; ditty.

Mandala (skt.): Mystic cosmic diagram; abode of world of deity, symbolically depicted as a cosmic diagram.

Mani (skt.): A mantra dedicated to Buddha of Compassion, Avalokitesvara. The mantra is *Om Mani Padme Hung*.

Menpa: local healer or health worker.

Meyo (smad g'yog): Skirt-like attire; petticoat.

Ngatse (ngag rtsal): Art of speech; oral skill.

Par shing mindru gyem (spar shing smin drug rgyal mo): Refers to a traditional western song or a ballad dedicated to the instruments used for ramming earth.

Pata (dpa' rtags): Sword.

Poenlop (dpon slob): Governor; chieftain.

Rabney (rab gnas): Consecration ceremony; religious festival.

Rangtha (rang 'thag): Grinding stones manoeuvred by hands.

Sabda (sa bdag): Earth deity.

Serga khotkhen mathang: It is a Tshangla term. The first male cousins from paternal aunts and maternal uncles are known as *serga khotkhen*, meaning Golden Brother In-laws and first female cousins from paternal aunts and maternal uncles are known as *serga mathang*, meaning Golden Sister In-laws.

Singchang: Juice of fermented grains.

Sowa Rigpa: indigenous medicine

Tashi Gacha: horse dies and the saddle breaks.

Tendre (rten 'bral): Ceremony, function or celebration; religious festivals.

Tercham (gter 'cham): Treasure dance; secret dance; naked dance.

Terdag: male shaman of superior status during the possession by powerful deity/deities diagnoses problems and propose remedies through long trances.

Tertoen (gter ston): Treasure revealer; discoverer of religious treasure hidden by Guru Rinpoche.

Tho (tho): A unit of measurement equal to the length of one's outstretched tip of middle finger and the thumb.

Thoe (thod): Turban; head gear.

Thrikor chusum (khri skor bcu gsum): The thirteen districts of Tibet governed by Drogoen Phagpa Choegyal (1235-1280), Lord of Sakya school.

Thuenpa puenzhi (mthun pa spun bzhi): Four Harmonious Friends.

Trimi: container used for storing lime for those who betel nuts.

Toego (stod go): Jacket dress worn by women.

Trashhi khadar (bkra shis kha dar): Felicity scarf.

Trashhi monlu (bkra shis smon glu): Aspiration songs.

Trashhi ngasoe (bkra shis mnga' gsol): Auspicious enthronement.

Trashhi tagye (bkra shis rtags brgyad): Eight Lucky Signs.

Tsezem (rtse gzeb): Luggage bamboo basket.

Tshering namdru (tshe ring rnam drug): The Six Symbols of Longevity.

Tshoghlham (tshogs lham): Traditional formal boots for men.

Tsipa or Tsip (rtsis pa): Astrologer specialized in different types of divinations and astrological calculation. This term varies from community to community and hence it is known as *Phajo* as well as *Jampel Yang* in other parts of Bhutan.

Wonju ('on ju): Bhutanese blouse.

Zangdo pelri (zangs mdog dpal ri): Copper-coloured Mountain believed to be the abode of Guru Rinpoche.

Zhabdrung (zhabs drung): Honorific title which means 'at whose feet one submits'.

Zhey (gzhas): Dance of the folk heroes.

Zheypoen (gzhas dpon): Lead dancer.

Zhey-yop (gzhas g.yog pa): Dance assistant.

Zom (zom): Barrel

Zurchen (zur chen): Phallus attached with a wooden sword installed on the four directions to ward off the evil eye.



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Since joining the National Library & Archives as a researcher in the Research & Media Division in 2010, Karchung has authored a number of research articles published in and outside Bhutan on aspects of culture, including the following: *Diminishing Cultures of Bhutan: Costume of Merak Community*; *Yak Cham: The Traditional Cultural Expression of Merak Community*; and *Wangdü Chöling Dzong: The Masterpiece of Gongsa Jigme Namgyel*. He is the author of the book *'From Yak-herding to Enlightenment: The Legend of Thöpa Gali – A Heritage Narrative of the Merak-Sakteng Community'* published by the National Library & Archives in 2013.



Jigme Choden is a Researcher with the Research and Media Division (National Library and Archives) under the Department of Culture. She has received her B.A. with Honors in English Literature from Sherubtse College in 2008 and also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Public Administration from the Royal Institute of Management in 2010. Some of her publications include *Diminishing Food Tradition of Bumthang: Khule and*

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Sonam Yudon is currently a Senior Librarian at the National Library and Archives of Bhutan, Thimphu. Prior to her appointment at the NLAB from 2007 to 2011 she served as the Librarian, College of Science and Technology, Royal University of Bhutan. She is one of the few library professionals in the country with a Master of Science in Information and Library Science from the Robert Gordon University, UK. While at the Royal University of Bhutan, she had been instrumental in library automation and staff training, taught Professional Communications and served as the Lady Provost of the College. Additionally, she was editor of the Annual Magazine and the College Newsletter as well Coordinator/Advisor of literary activities.

Yudon is actively involved in the management, planning, coordination and resourcing works of the National Library and Archives of Bhutan and also

undertaking field research with the Department of Culture on the mapping of intangible cultural heritage elements in Bhutan. Currently, she is spearheading the drafting of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Bill of Bhutan and involved in other policy papers such as the National Archives Bill. In 2013, Yudon was involved in successfully implementing a Mobile Library for Thimphu with support from Save the Children Bhutan. Recently she has been working on a proposal for e-Library Project in Bhutan to be funded by the Government of India.

She has carried out a joint research on Tibetan Diaspora in Bhutan, and presented a paper on Traditional Cloth Making in Bhutan during SAARC Regional Seminar on Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expression in 2013 at Sri Lanka.



Sonam Yangden holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Sherubtse College, and received her Master's of Science degree in Information and Library Studies from the UK in 2006. She formerly worked as a librarian for Sherubtse College. Ms. Sonam is currently working for

the National Library and Archives of Bhutan. Although a librarian by profession, she has particular interest in intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan, and has gained adequate insight, knowledge and orientation in the field of intangible cultural heritage.



Tshering Choki is an Archivist at the National Library and Archives of Bhutan, Thimphu.

Choki is instrumental in management of record, conservation and preservation of rare documents at the National Library and Archives. She has also undertaken a field research on the mapping of intangible cultural heritage elements in Bhutan.

Choki has carried out a joint research on Tibetan Diaspora in Bhutan and currently carrying out a research on Community Engagement in the Preservation and Management of Chortens in Bhutan with the grant from SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka. She has presented a paper on the practice of Shamanism in Bhutan in 2013 in South Korea. She has a Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) from Sherubtse College in 2005.



Yeshi Lhendup is a Librarian at National Library and Archives of Bhutan since 2007. He graduated with BA Dzongkha from Institute of Language and Cultural Studies, Royal University of Bhutan in 2005. He has not only authored a few research articles on Intangible Cultural Heritage but also edited and translated magazines and manual books from Choekey (Bhutanese

classical language) and Dzongkha languages to English or vice versa. His articles are *The Art of Wood Block Carving and Printing in Bhutan* and *Dawa Chunye pai Losar, the New Year Eve of Kakphudung village under Martshala Geog in Samdrupjongkhar District* (forthcoming).

CONTRIBUTORS

KOREA

Seong-Yong PARK (ICHCAP, Korea)

Dr. Park sets and administers the overall strategy and direction for ICHCAP's efforts in supporting and raising the competence of activities to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region. Dr. Park conducted the final supervision of this book and has overseen a project on developing a national ICH information system in Bhutan since 2011.

Deoksoon KIM (ICHCAP, Korea)

Mr. Kim was in charge of the overall planning and coordination of the publication and commemoration of this reference book and has been a partner on a project to develop a national ICH information system in Bhutan. Since 2011, Mr. Kim has served as Chief of the Cooperation and Networking Section, which oversees business regarding cooperation to build ICHCAP's international ICH network.

Weonmo PARK (ICHCAP, Korea)

Mr. Park was an early planner who set the foundation for the project to develop a national ICH information system in Bhutan that has made today's success possible. Since 2015, Mr. Park has served as Chief of the Knowledge and Publication Section, which manages activities at ICHCAP to promote intangible cultural heritage and raise public awareness.

Minyung JUNG (ICHCAP, Korea)

In charge of the project to develop a national ICH information system in Bhutan, Ms. Jung has executed and managed the project at the working level through practical coordination with Bhutan since 2013. As a Programme Officer in the Cooperation and Networking Section, Ms. Jung conducts cooperative projects between ICHCAP and Southeast Asian countries.

Yeonsu KIM (CHA, Korea)

Ms. Kim, of the Cultural Heritage Administration, is in charge of the international cooperation related to the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. She also supported this publication and the organization of the ICH symposium and book launching ceremony.

Shiyung RYU (CHA, Korea)

Mr. Ryu is in charge of the ODA project of the Cultural Heritage Administration and has been supporting the four-year project between ICHCAP and the Department of Culture of Bhutan. He also secured necessary funds for the Bhutan ICH book publication and sponsored Bhutan through ICHCAP.

BHUTAN**Dorjee Tshering (DoC, Bhutan)**

This project got materialized during the tenure of Mr. Dorjee Tshering who was then the Director General, Department of Culture. He provided every form of support from the time of launching of the project. At every juncture during his tenure, he kindly made resources available to continue the project. Currently, he is the Director General of the Department of Traditional Medicines.

Rinzin Penjore (DoC, Bhutan)

Mr. Rinzin Penjore, the current Director of the Department of Culture, has also been unstinting in his support for the project, enabling it to come to fruition.

Harka B. Gurung (NLAB, Bhutan)

Mr. Harka B. Gurung, Director of the National Library and Archives of Bhutan, facilitated this project from its inception and motivated the members of the research team to undertake extended and intensive field work outside their regular duties. He greatly smoothed the administrative path relating to setting up the field work activities, took deep interest in every stage of progress of the project, accompanied the research teams to the field survey whenever he could as a motivator and guide, and provided valuable advice for its successful implementation.

Yonten Dargye (NLAB, Bhutan)

Dr. Yonten Dargye, Chief Research Officer for the Research and Media Division, was primarily responsible for the inception of the project as well as forming the collaboration with NLAB's counterparts at ICHCAP in Korea. Further, he was responsible for the overall coordination and supervision of the Bhutanese team's research efforts. In addition to authoring the introduction to this volume, he also provided close coordination for its compilation, editing, and printing.

Sonam Tobgay (NLAB, Bhutan)

Mr. Sonam Tobgay, Research Officer for the Research and Media Division, aided in various administrative tasks, including preparing budgets for each phase of the project, submitting project reports, organizing meetings related to the project and communicating with the relevant agencies inside and outside Bhutan.

Lotoey Pem (NLAB, Bhutan)

Mrs. Lotoey Pem helped at various stages of the project and accompanied the researchers to the field survey whenever she could find her time. She is currently the IT Officer at National Library and Archives.

